9/11 REMEMBERED

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ONE YEAR LATER

Captain America remembers 9/11

OCTOBER 2002
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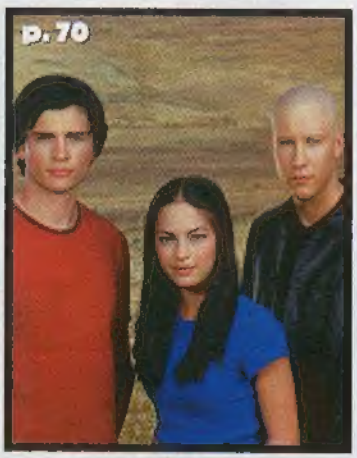
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ON THE COVERS

The solemn **Captain America** cover (left)–drawn by John Cassaday and colored by Dave Stewart–ties into our remembrance of the events of 9/11 throughout this issue, including our feature on Cap's new direction on **page 50**. The **Superman vs. Goku** cover by J. Scott Campbell and colored by Matt Milla of Haberlin Studios is sure to spark some debate. Turn to **page 62**, where American heroes do battle with Japan's stars.

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Cover and this page: Smallville photos courtesy of the WB

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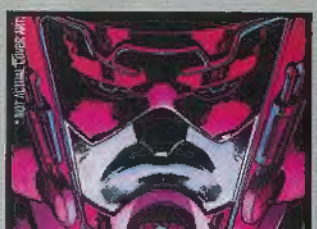
EXCLUSIVE OFFER

COOL STUFF THROUGH THE MAIL

FANTASTIC FOUR #48 ACE



Relive some of comics' good ol' glory days with this ACE-style reprint of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's Fantastic Four tale that introduced the devourer of planets, Galactus, and his glistening herald, Silver Surfer, into the Marvel Universe. Featuring a new acetate cover by Mike Wieringo (*Fantastic Four*), an introduction by Stan Lee and an original "Twisted ToyFare Theatre," this is one ACE edition you don't want to miss out on! Stretch on over to **page 48** to order your copy today! Hurry! It's clobberin' time!

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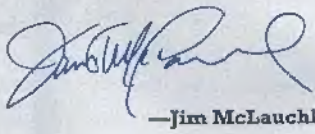
MAGIC WORDS

If you think about it, and strip away all the questions and answers and smart-ass remarks, "Magic Words" is really all about one thing: making a connection.

Whether it's fans who want to connect with their favorite creators, or creators who want to explain their artistic vision to an audience, the letters column is about a human touch that bridges across a simple printed page.

The human connection is especially apparent in this month's column. A year removed from the events of September 11, we've chosen to break from the usual routine to take letters from comic creators on their remembrances and reactions from that day.

No, this is *not* the usual questions and answers and smart-ass remarks you may be used to. But we encourage you to find a comfy chair and read it, perhaps through a different set of eyes. You'll still feel the same human connection you feel every month in these pages. You'll just feel it in a different way.



—Jim McLauchlin

What happened in our industry after 9/11 was so much better than what people even realize. The charity was amazing. But what gave me pride was that so many people in our industry, who usually use this medium as a form of entertainment, found themselves using it as a form of self-expression. You saw people roll up their sleeves and dig themselves into their art out of a desperate necessity to work it out. To see them turn to their medium and express themselves so boldly and charitably was one of the greatest moments this industry has ever had. Other industries have done it—music in particular—but I'm not sure we'd ever done it. I think we found a semblance of self-fulfillment we haven't felt before. And I wouldn't be surprised to find the medium as a whole produce more personal works now. I'm hoping people try to recapture that feeling and try to share it with their audiences. People will have the desire and courage to say things about themselves. They want to tell us what they're about and I'm glad people rose to the challenge and made a difference in their own medium.

Brian Michael Bendis, writer of *Powers*, *Ultimate Spider-Man*, *Alias* and *Daredevil*

It changed everyone. Whether they know it or not.

Some say we have no business being involved in the trouble in the Middle East. Some say this is how this horrible tragedy came about. Others disagree. It's an argument full of facts mixed with propaganda shelled out from either side. I don't know the answer. Do you?

Though the American government likes us to believe they are as apple pie as Superman, we know that isn't the case. There are a few rotten apples in this pie. So where do comic readers fit in? And why the hell am I writing this in *Wizard*?

To remind you what Superman thinks of America.

America is *not* government. *We* are America.

And every one of us has the responsibility to themselves and this country to not only tolerate diversity, but to embrace it. To make America's foundation stronger. And to remember "the public" is what makes America great. We all have the power to help repair America; we just need to remember to use it.

Geoff Johns, writer of *JSA*, *Hawkman*, *Avengers* and *The Flash*

I was one of the 4,000 people who attended the Imagine New York forum, featuring the initial, uninspired plans for a new WTC site. Our table offered pages of suggestions, ideas and opinions. One of the women at our table lost her husband in the South Tower; they'd been married a mere 10 months. I warmed to her instantly, and she reminded me of so many I know affected by this: the friend whose cousin perished when the buildings collapsed; another who lives near Ground Zero and couldn't go home for weeks; or the fireman who, even having lost half the men in his house, took the time to explain to me why comics are so great and why Batman is such a great character.

I think about 9/11 every day. And when I think about how it has affected my work, I think of these people, and the suggestions our table gave to the Lower Manhattan Development Committee and the architects redesigning the site.

Be bold, we said. Be amazing. Demand excellence and yield it in return. Be inspiring. The people who spend their money, their time and passion on my work deserve that. To do anything less is insulting—not simply to them, but to those who no longer have the choice to be bold or amazing, inspired or passionate, because their lives were taken from them so horribly that September morning.

Phil Jimenez, writer/artist of *Wonder Woman* and artist on *New X-Men*

I remember I was in my room sleeping. I was getting ready to go to L.A. for the next couple of days on business and was trying to get a little rest. My brother Roger barged into my room and said, "I don't think we'll be going to L.A." He told me to go to the TV room to check something out. When I saw what was going on in NY, I couldn't believe my eyes. I thought I was watching a movie. It seemed so surreal. I skipped work and watched TV for six hours straight.

For the first few months after 9/11, I didn't want to do business or have any meetings in tall buildings, and I definitely didn't want to fly anywhere. Even now, we've been doing a lot of road trips.

It impacted my life dramatically. I no longer take advantage of life and appreciate even the simplest things. Life is too short. It pulled anger from me that I've never seen before, and made my life very depressing at points. I feel sadness, mainly for humanity and what we've become.

Canada was very quiet, but you could feel the sadness everywhere. America is a close neighbor, so Canadians felt the impact just as much. It affected Canadians near and far from NYC.

I still hate flying and I hug my family a whole lot more often. I try not to think about it anymore just because it makes me really depressed and angry. It will be hard to forget what happened.

I'm lucky because I get to work in comics and what better way to is there to escape the cruelty of the real world than comics.

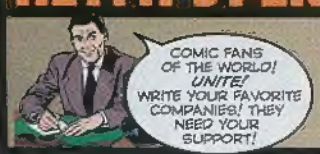
Pat Lee, artist of *Transformers G1*, president of Dreamwave Productions

I was attending a convention in Northern Spain, having just arrived in Aviles after a journey that took the best part of a day and crossed about seven or eight time zones. Obviously, I was jet-lagged as hell—green around the gills and disoriented. Our hosts took us to a café so that we could eat before going to bed and adjust to the time change. It was about 6 p.m. or so, and suddenly, a couple of the locals began pointing to the television up above the bar. Since I spoke little Spanish, there was a certain amount of frustration because I couldn't quite understand what was going on. Just as I managed to work out that we were watching a live picture, the second plane crashed into the WTC.

There were three English-speaking creators there—myself, Sean Phillips and P. Craig Russell. To us, it was like some kind of weird repeat of something that must have happened before. (I remember seeing the space shuttle explode live on about 70 screens in a TV and audio repair workshop, and that also seemed like it must be a replay). Sean and I have known each other for years, so we were able to attach ourselves to a familiar face. We got drunk off our arses...we'd grab a beer and go for a walk around town. Every time we came back for a refill, something else would have happened. It was so bizarre. Poor Craig is a very sweet-natured and sensitive chap. I remember that his hands shook, he was so terrified. I spent a lot of time talking him off the ledge, so to speak. He did the same for me a couple of times. In the end, I stayed awake for about two days straight before I finally went back to sleep.

When I finally got in touch with my fiancée, Melinda, I was extremely freaked out. I was 2,000 miles away and still a week from coming home. But I remember that during our first

HEY! IT'S PEN PALS...



Like a title? Hate a character? Just have something to say? Then write your favorite comic company and let 'em know what you're thinking. Send your thoughts to the following addresses, but be sure to send your letters in care of a particular book or editor. Power to the people!

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conversation I had a pretty calm reaction. I told her that rather than make me want to bomb the bastards who organized it, this made me want to go and find a Muslim and shake his or her hand. These religious fundamentalists, they're responsible for the Crusades, for the Inquisition, for all sorts of genocide not in the name of God but in the name of their stupid interpretations of a bunch of rules they wrote in the first place. You know...you get the feeling Jesus and Mohammed and Buddha are all sitting around together just shaking their heads at these idiots. I didn't need all of these people to die to know that Palestine is a problem, or that the U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia is unwelcome. I'm not sure I've been changed much at all, really–I was pretty friendly towards everyone before this happened and I'm damn sure no one's going to make me dislike someone because of their religious convictions. That would be like hating someone for the color of their hair, or their eyes or skin. (Personally, I think we could work this out over a couple of beverages and a game of ping-pong. I think that's what Jesus or Mohammed would have done, but they hadn't invented ping-pong in those days.)

As far as the impact on the industry in which I work, I have no idea. I've written about hatred and I've written about intolerance, but then again I normally write about things that are on my mind. I'd like to think people are nicer to each other these days—maybe this catastrophe has helped us all become a little closer to each other. I think it's easier for me to write about heroism, perhaps.

Paul Jenkins, writer of *Peter Parker, Spider-Man*

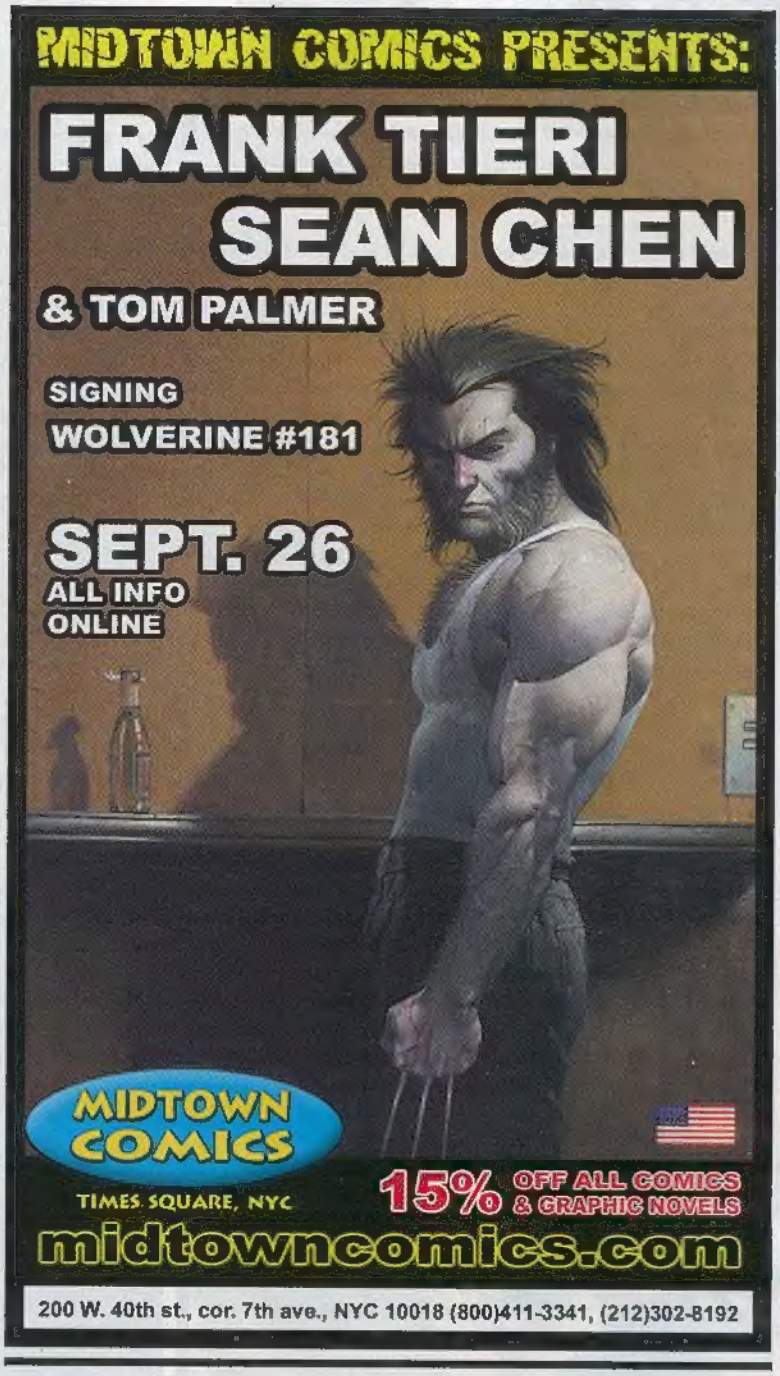
I actually felt good about being involved in comics after the fact. The events of this day brought to the forefront, in all of our media, that it was suddenly important to make entertainment relevant to the world we live in.

All comics are—or TV, or film, or whatever—is communication. You can use that communication for empty entertainment, or you can use it for a cross-breed of relevance and entertainment.

The day was horribly tragic; but it also brought us back into seeing what we could do in our work to inspire people and to bring messages to people.

Superheroes are an important part of that. We've embraced heroism more than ever before in this last year. Superheroes, if anything, are dressed-up harbingers of what we're supposed to believe in, in what's good.

I love the fact that we in comics have become more ambitious. I give big props to [Marvel Editor-in-Chief] Joe Quesada, because among the many things he's done at Marvel, Joe took *Captain America* and helped make it a book that's about fighting terrorism. And why not? Captain America *is* a comic book Uncle Sam. Why shouldn't we use him that way? It's now relevant to the world we live in. It's horrible that we needed September



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QUICK HITS

THE READERS STRIKE BACK!

"Your 'Top 100 Paperbacks of All Time' list [*Wizard* #131] was good, but no *Kabuki* books? You can't tell me that *Circle of Blood* or *Metamorphosis* are not worthy."

—Bryan Goff, rbgoff24@aol.com

"I'll never know exactly who stood up in that crowded, hectic, no-doubt-funky conference room and said, '*The Coffin* is one of the 100 best paperbacks ever!', so I'm sending my thanks to all of you."

—Phil Hester, *The Coffin* creator

"After reading *Wizard* #131's 'Top 100 Paperbacks,' I was filled with great joy. You see, I'm only 20 years old and I've already read 45 of the Top 100!"

—Dante Kleinberg, West Bloomfield, MI

"You have got to be kidding me. How can this list not include any of the first four *ElfQuest* books?"

—Jason Haggstrom, jason@haggstrom.net

"I like lists such as *Wizard*'s 'Top 100 paperbacks' because they stimulate conversation. Gives the fanboys/girls something to think about between episodes of 'Witchblade' and 'Buffy.'"

—John Seals, jseals@jasc.com

"Good thing you mention Will Eisner in your 'Top 100' list. But no actual Will Eisner books? How come?"

—James Sommers, Minneapolis, MN

"How much longer can Grant Morrison keep up the work on *New X-Men*? Ever since he's started, he has not missed the mark of excellence."

—Levi Williams, ljedediah@yahoo.com

"Good Lord, I hate that Ultimate Marvel stuff. Hopefully it will fizzle out like Marvel U.K. and Marvel 2099."

—Antonio C. Cordova, ac_cordove@hotmail.com

"You gotta be kidding me. 'Babe Watch' in the *Wizard* #130 price guide? 'Check out the gams on this one!' Geez, if you forget that females read comics too, at least have some self-respect."

—Steve Kendon, Heathcote, Australia

"This 'Bruce Wayne: Murderer?' storyline stinks. It is just taking too long to drag out."

—Joseph E. Toth, Pine Bush, N.Y

"Hats off to Richard Corben for, if nothing else, some of the best-designed comic covers *ever* on the Marvel MAX *Cage* series."

—William Bullin, Van Nuys, CA

"Hasn't this current wave of comic 'nostalgia' been going on forever? Isn't the success of Batman and Captain America (left) comics perhaps...1940s nostalgia?"

—Jeff Lawrence, Boston, MA

CAPTAIN AMERICA

11 to teach us that. But it's good we learned the lesson.

Alex Ross, art director of *Battle of the Planets*

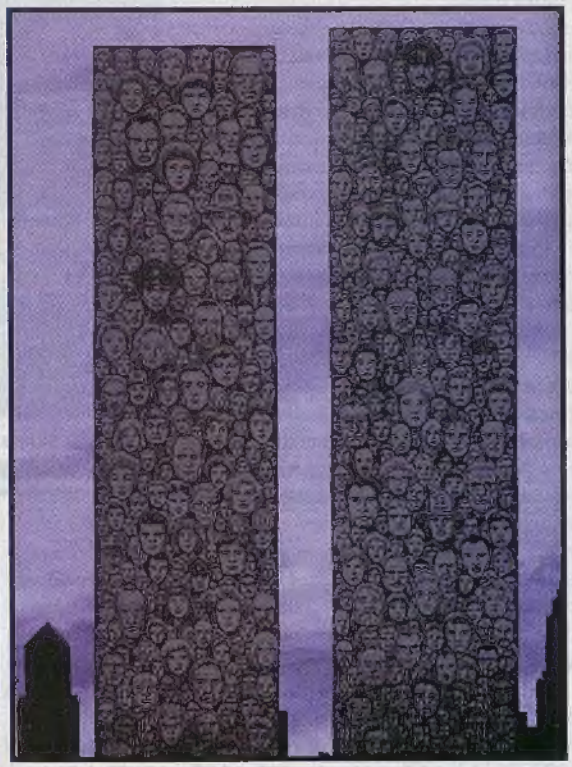
It's one of those things that forever imprints a specific moment on your mind. For my generation, it's the moment when you heard [former President Ronald] Reagan had been shot (stepping off a school bus in a driving rain). The moment when the [space shuttle] Challenger exploded (getting ready to leave for a college class). And the moment when the World Trade Center was attacked (driving to the CrossGen offices, listening to NPR).

Just a few days after the attack I was asked to participate in a 9/11 tribute book. Ultimately I decided not to, feeling that nothing I could write could even begin to address the enormity of the tragedy, that any response I had could only trivialize the events. Even now, a year later, I still feel the same way.

Ron Marz, writer of *Sojourn*, *The Path* and *Scion*

September 11 is actually [Top Cow Sales Director] Frank Mastromauro's birthday. I had a big party planned for him at this go-cart place with pizza, 200 balloons, the works. What with the events of the day, we all just wound up coming over to my place that evening instead and spent a quiet night together.

I've flown, it must be 20 times since then. I'll actually be flying to Hawaii this September 11. You can't let these things change your life. I haven't changed anything in my life or



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my work. I'm not going to let anyone affect my job, especially people as cruel as this. My stories will not get suddenly vindictive. I'm also not going to suddenly start getting preachy. I'm not going to get mad and let this affect my work. I'm not going to change what I do, because as cliché as it sounds, as soon as you do that, the bad guys win.

Michael Turner, writer/artist of *Fathom*

My brother Chris was always a hero to me. On September 11, 2001, he and 342 of his FDNY "brothers" became heroes to a nation.

Chris was nine years older than me. When you're growing up, a brother who's nine years older is like having your own personal superhero. He could do anything. He was great at sports. He could drive. And he had great records to "borrow." I can't tell you how many times I snuck into his room and played Black Sabbath's "Iron Man," and The Who's *Who's Next* album. Plus, he was a volunteer fireman at the age of 16. Dad was a cop and now Chris was a fireman. How cool was that? I was surrounded by larger-than-life figures.

After high school, Chris joined the Air Force and served as a firefighter for four years. During his term of service, he also became a paramedic. Upon leaving the Air Force, he got on the New York Fire Department, where he would work for the next 20 years of his life. Occasionally, he would nonchalantly share stories of some of the fires he fought or someone who he treated as a paramedic. He made life-threatening situations seem routine. There was not one day that went by that I thought something might happen to him. He was my big brother and there were few, if any, people better at his job than he was.

Chris was never one to brag of his exploits on the job. There were times that if you hadn't seen him featured in the newspaper, you would never have known the extent of his heroics. Whether it was entering a partially submerged plane that skidded off the runway at La Guardia, or spending hours beneath a collapsed building in the Bronx tending to an injured man trapped beneath the rubble, he never let on how vital his role in these operations was.

He also remained a paramedic throughout his career and worked almost another 40 hours a week saving lives that way as well. He lived to help others. With all that working, he still had time to be a fantastic father to his three kids. His life was one of helping people when their lives were at their worst. His compassion and lust for life were boundless. He was playful and mischievous and always had a smile, which usually meant he was up to something.

Chris was assigned to one of the city's elite Rescue units, Rescue 3, a.k.a. "Big Blue." Their specialty, besides "routine" firefighting, is structure collapses. Even though they are stationed in the South Bronx, they respond all over the city as needed. In 1993, the unit responded to the World Trade Center bombing, so it was no surprise to me that they responded on September 11.

Upon hearing the news of the attack that Tuesday morning, we at *Wizard* gathered around a TV in the conference room struck numb at what we were witnessing. I remember staffers talking about friends and relatives who worked in the area and how worried they were. I wasn't worried, knowing Chris was either on the scene, or was going to be there very shortly. We closed the office and headed home shortly after 11a.m. I remember waiting for my wife to get home from work and then we went out to give blood. Still, I wasn't worried.

After a four-hour wait to give, I heard someone's radio broadcasting a newsflash. The news was reporting that over 300 firemen were missing. It was at that moment it felt like I had a vice closed around my heart. Reality was about to hit and hit hard. I called my sister on my cell phone and she confirmed that he was one of the missing. He and 342 of his firefighter brothers would not be coming home.

On September 11, the world found out something I'd known all my life. My brother was a hero. At his memorial service, a government official put something into perspective for me. Even though over 2,000 people died that day, thanks to the efforts of the FDNY, NYPD and other emergency services personnel, *tens of thousands* of people were saved. Chris will forever be remembered for what he was: a true hero. Not just to me, but to everyone. His name will be emblazoned on plaques in various locations, but most importantly to myself and my family, it will forever be emblazoned in our hearts.

Steve Blackwell, Creative Director of Wizard Entertainment

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ULTIMATE SHOWDOWN

Ultimates and X-Men slug it out this December in four-issue issue mini-series

This Christmas, Mark Millar will play a twisted Santa Claus—and be carrying a big red bag full of X-Men and Avengers.

But don't be surprised if Millar's goodies are naughty and not so nice. Millar and artist Chris Bachalo (*Uncanny X-Men*) launch *The Ultimates vs. Ultimate X-Men*, a four-issue mini-series scheduled to ship this December that promises to be a knock-down, drag-out brawl between the two superteams. According to Millar, the project will supplant the '80s nostalgia books that have recently dominated the No. 1 slot on Diamond's Top 100 Comics sales charts—a spot Millar's *The Ultimates* once held tightly.

"*Transformers*, your ass belongs to me," exclaimed Millar in his thick Scottish brogue. "I'd rather not give too many spoilers, but pitting the two teams against one another just seemed like the most fun, and heroes kicking the sh— out of other heroes is such a great Marvel tradition. The actual reason for their conflict was just so glaringly obvious. It just works great."

October's issue #25 of *Ultimate X-Men* will feature the return of Magneto, which the writer revealed will play a major part in the reason the Ultimates and X-Men finally cross paths.

"I've been plotting [the return of Magneto] since issue #1, and the scale of the story was just so big that there was no way the Ultimates as a national defense force could stay out of it," said Millar. "[The Ultimates are] a highly paid defense initiative and the [X-Men are] perceived to be the greatest threat mankind has ever faced. Getting them together is easy. Stopping them from killing each other was always going to be the hard part."

But while Millar said Magneto and a renewed Brotherhood of Mutants serve as antagonists in the mini-series, the real villains of the four-issue tale are the X-Men. According to the Glasgow-based writer, fans can expect their favorite characters from both *The Ultimates* and *Ultimate X-Men* to square off in some serious battles—with major casualties on both sides.

"Want to see Wolverine's claws slashing through Iron Man's armor?" teased Millar. "Want to see Captain America and Black Widow blowing up the Blackbird? Want to see Hawkeye putting an arrow through Rogue? Thor fighting Colossus? Xavier versus Fury? The all-new underground X-Men school? Just close your eyes and wish it was December, chum."

Bachalo, who recently wrapped up his fill-in run for Adam Kubert on *Ultimate X-Men* #16-19, says he loves Millar's writing but didn't immediately jump at the chance to re-team with the writer.

"I think as a creative talent, [Millar's] doing an incredible job on *The*

MUTANT MAYHEM Colossus and Wolverine (above), along with the rest of the X-Men, will be the antagonists when they battle Hulk (inset) and The Ultimates.

READ ON... INSIDE
WIZARD FAN AWARDS
ESCAPE FROM N.Y. COMICS
ALEX ROSS' NEW PROJECT

Ultimates and *Ultimate X-Men*," gushed Bachalo. "*The Ultimates* book is by far the best comic book in the business. If there is anything better, I can't think of it. It was hard to find a reason not to do this series, but I did think about it a great deal. I had to put a lot of things on hold. Luckily, we all worked out the schedules."

Bachalo also said he looks forward to working on the *Ultimate X-Men* characters again and can't wait for his first crack at The Ultimates lineup—especially the Ultimate version of Captain America.

"I think as assignments go, this one takes the cake," said Bachalo.

But according to Ultimate line editor and Marvel Comics continuity guru Ralph Macchio, *The Ultimates vs. Ultimate X-Men* is just the beginning of a huge year for the Ultimate line. While most of the plans for 2003 are still top secret, Ultimate Venom (**see sidebar**) will definitely show up in December's *Ultimate Spider-Man* #30 and there are rumors that major cast changes will sweep through *Ultimate X-Men* and *The Ultimates* as soon as January.

"This is really just the spearhead of everything that happens in the Ultimate titles beginning in December," said Macchio. "We don't want people to take these books for granted. The end of the year really seems like a second launch of the Ultimate line."

But while there's a lot to look forward to in the Ultimate line as 2003 grows closer, Millar said fans won't be disappointed by *Ultimates vs. Ultimate X-Men* because it'll be anything but the typical Marvel crossover of old and more like recent Marvel Films' hits such as "X-Men" and "Spider-Man."

"I know these characters have all met a million times in the *old* Marvel Universe, but it just feels so *fresh* writing this," exclaimed Millar. "We actually feel like the characters are in trouble as opposed to that 40 years of re-heats feeling you usually get when you hear about the latest company crossover. The characters are all really interesting and writing this is the most fun I've had with the line so far. This just feels like a movie. I feel like Jim Cameron or Sam Raimi's directing this one. It just feels big!" ■ **MIKE COTTON**

SPEWING VENOM

BENDIS UNLEASHES ULTIMATE VERSION OF VENOM

Brian Michael Bendis finally had to give in.

Since the release of *Ultimate Spider-Man*, fans have begged and pleaded for their favorite Spider-Man villain to get the "Ultimate" treatment. After two years, the writer's finally giving the fans what they want–Ultimate Venom.

ULTIMATE VENOM

But just like everything else in the Ultimate Universe, don't expect Ultimate Venom to be anything like his Marvel U. counterpart.

"[Marvel President] Bill Jemas and I came up with a great origin," said Bendis. "A space symbiote from *Secret Wars* doesn't fit into *Ultimate Spider-Man*. Our Spider-Man can't go out in space. This origin will fit into the world of Norman [Osborn] and Peter Parker."

Ultimate Venom, who debuts in December's *Ultimate Spider-Man* #30, will have an origin that ties into what Peter Parker's father was working on before he died, and uncover what Peter's life was like before he became an orphan.

"I think that people will be surprised by the way [Venom's alter ego] Eddie Brock and Peter are connected–it'll shock a lot of people," said Bendis.

The Portland-based writer explained that he's always felt Peter Parker's mother and father were mishandled in the traditional Marvel Universe and he doesn't want to ignore them any longer in the Ultimate Universe he helped create.

"We're really going to show where Peter comes from," revealed Bendis. "Not to crap on fans, but I was never a Venom fan. He looks great but he came out of the Spider-Man-space-traveler era. Hopefully we've found a way to incorporate him to our universe and make him work." ■ **MC**

'NEW X-MEN' GETS PHIL IN

After 'Wonder Woman,' Jimenez joins X-team

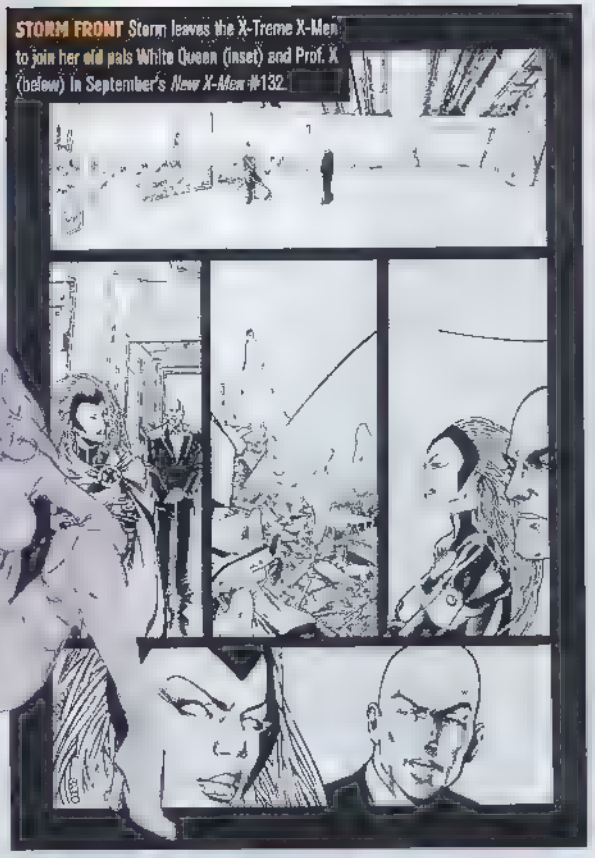
For Phil Jimenez, there's plenty 'new' under the sun. After his killer run on *Wonder Woman*, Jimenez takes over some of Frank Quitely's penciling duties on the smash hit *New X Men*.

"I'm thrilled to be working on *New X Men*, because it's currently my favorite book on the market," said Jimenez.

After a one-shot issue in September, Jimenez will bring his magic pencils to a three-issue storyarc in Spring 2003.

Jimenez will join forces with legendary scribe Grant Morrison, who he worked with on *The Invisibles*. "I'm really excited to be working with Grant Morrison again," said the artist. "I can't wait to see where he takes the book."

For Jimenez, working on *New X-Men* means playing with some of his favorite characters, especially nice guy Beast. "In a sea of nastiness, it's always good to have a character with a good heart, especially if he looks like a big blue cat." ■ CAITLIN MORIARITY



STORM FRONT Storm leaves the X-Treme X-Men to join her old pals White Queen (inset) and Prof. X (below) in September's *New X-Men* #132.

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MARVEL RULES FAN AWARDS

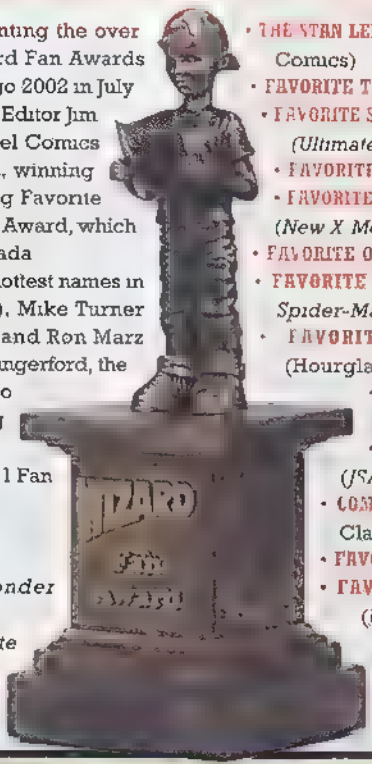
House of Ideas walks away with 14 of 19 categories

After months of counting and recounting the over 12,000 votes, the 9th annual Wizard Fan Awards were presented at Wizard World Chicago 2002 in July.

Hosted by *Wizard*'s own Contributing Editor Jim McLauchlin, the awards show saw Marvel Comics take home the lion's share of the prizes, winning 14 of the 19 awards presented, including Favorite Publisher and the first Stan Lee Excelsior Award, which went to Marvel Editor in Chief Joe Quesada.

On hand to present awards were the hottest names in comics, including Paul Jenkins (*Origin*), Mike Turner (*Fathom*), Mark Waid (*Fantastic Four*) and Ron Marz (*Sojourn*). Also in attendance was Andy Hungerford, the winner of *Wizard*'s 3rd annual "Direct to Video Contest," who debuted his winning entry, "Becoming Superman."

Here's a complete rundown of the 2001 Fan Award Winners:



- FAVORITE HEROINE—Batgirl (*Batgirl*)
- FAVORITE PAINTER—Alex Ross (*Wonder Woman: Spirit of Truth*)
- FAVORITE INKER—Art Thibert (*Ultimate Spider-Man*)
- FAVORITE VILLAIN—Magneto (*Ultimate X-Men*)
- THE STAN LEE EXCELSIOR AWARD—Joe Quesada (Marvel Comics)
- FAVORITE TV OR MOVIE—"Smallville" (The WB)
- FAVORITE SUPPORTING CHARACTER—Mary Jane Watson (*Ultimate Spider-Man*)
- FAVORITE COLORIST—Richard Isanove (*Origin*)
- FAVORITE LETTERER—Richard Starkings & Comicraft (*New X-Men*)
- FAVORITE ONE-SHOT OR MINI-SERIES—*Origin*
- FAVORITE HERO—Ultimate Spider-Man (*Ultimate Spider-Man*)
- FAVORITE MERCHANDISE—Hellboy Nodder (Hourglass Studios)
- FAVORITE EDITOR—Axel Alonso (*Amazing Spider-Man*)
- BREAKOUT TALENT—Geoff Johns (*JSA, Flash*)
- COMICS GREATEST MOMENT—Wolverine Pops Claws for the First Time (*Origin*)
- FAVORITE PUBLISHER—Marvel Comics
- FAVORITE WRITER—Brian Michael Bendis (*Ultimate Spider-Man*)
- FAVORITE PENCILER—Adam Kubert (*Ultimate X-Men*)
- FAVORITE ONGOING SERIES—*Ultimate Spider-Man*

■ THE WIZARD STAFF

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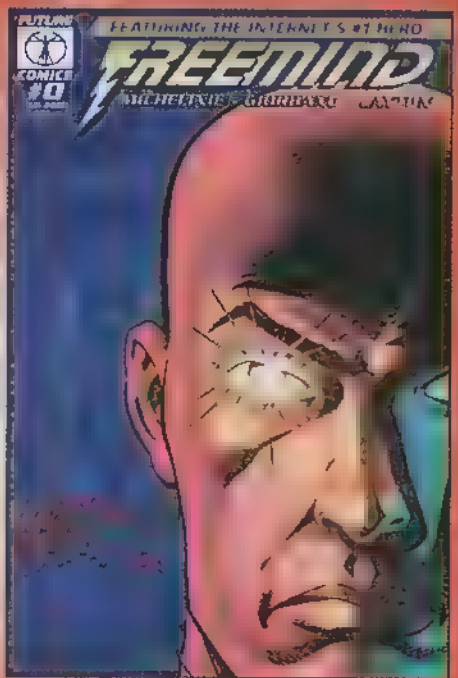

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THE BUZZBIN

SECRET WARS Rumor has it that Marvel's working on a new *Secret Wars* mini-series planned for early 2003. Sources at the House of Ideas indicate Brian Michael Bendis will team with a still-unsigned artist for the series set in mainstream Marvel continuity, not Ultimate continuity as some have speculated.

DARK LICENSES Dark Horse is going license crazy! The publisher is currently in negotiations to obtain the rights to publish comics based on the films "Metropolis," "Reign of Fire" and "Shrek."

MILLAR MOVES Marvel's Ultimate line might be in line for a shake-up if it's true that writer Mark Millar plans to leave *Ultimate X-Men* in early 2003. But fear not Millar fanatics--reportedly, the scribe will take a shot at writing a few issues of *The Punisher* soon after his Ultimate exit.

GAIMAN'S IMAGE The reason the Image 10th-anniversary hardcover is late? *Sandman* creator Neil Gaiman, according to Todd McFarlane. McFarlane said on his Website (**www.mcfarlane.com**) that he wanted to use a number of *Spawn* characters (created by Gaiman) that are currently tied up due to a legal battle with Gaiman over their ownership.

AZZARELLO'S WORLD Now that he's finished with *Hellblazer*, Brian Azzarello has time for a few other projects in addition to the upcoming Sgt. Rock (see story page 79). A western mini-series for Vertigo and a possible Superman mini-series are currently in the works.

CAP'S BACK! No, not Captain America, but rather Captain Britain may be making his re-entrance into Marvel continuity soon via an all-new mini-series. While Marvel won't release the creative team behind the reintroduction, they do say Alan Moore has "given his blessing" to the writer and artist who will take over the series.

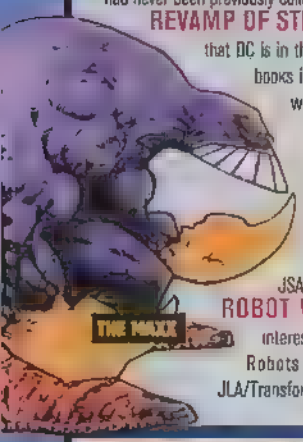
DC DROPS THE CODE? Notice something different about DC's books lately? Many of the core DC titles have dropped the Comics Code from their covers, and rumor has it DC may be leaving the code entirely by the end of year.

MAXED OUT Don't expect Kevin Smith, now a Marvel-exclusive writer, to truck his creator-owned "View Askew" comics over to Marvel's MAX line anytime soon. He's a bit busy on his next film. "The soonest I'd start thinking about that would be after 'Jersey Girl,'" Smith said. "I'm a little inundated right now."

MAXXED IN DC Comics is reportedly in negotiation to bring Sam Kieth's cult classic Image Comics series, *The Maxx*, back into print in collected editions. *The Maxx* had never been previously collected.

REVAMP OF STEEL Leaks from the Fortress of Solitude indicate that DC is in the process of another Superman revamp. Monthly books in continuity may be reduced from four to three, with the fourth book either being canceled or hosting rotating creators in out-of-continuity stories, a la Marvel's *Spider-Man's Tangled Web*.

ALL-STAR BACK-UPS Rumor has it that writers Geoff Johns and David Goyer may be giving *JSA* readers more bang for their two bucks by adding "All Star Comics," stories starring classic JSA characters, as back-up tales in their hit title.



ROBOT WARS The Big Two (Marvel and DC) may be interested in doing a crossover with everyone's favorite Robots in Disguise. Rumored projects include a JLA/Transformers and an X-Men/Transformers crossover.

OOPS

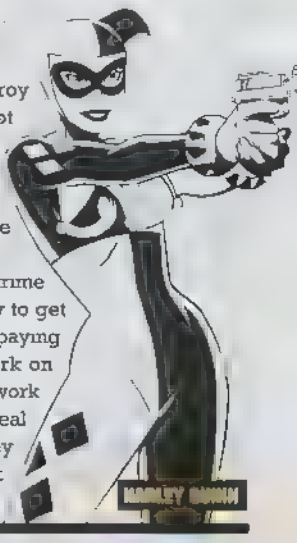
Three photo credits were mistakenly omitted in issue #131. The John Romita Jr. photo on page #25 was taken by David Levin, the Spider-Man Sock Puppet photo on page #122 was taken by Lori Custer and the Plastic Man "Stretch Armstrong" Mego Prototype was taken by Brian Razzi.

OVERHAULING HARLEY

Harley Quinn gets a facelift from mad genius behind Oni Press' 'The Coffin'

Everyone's favorite respected psychologist turned insane-Joker-minion gets brainwarped again this November. Mike Huddleston, penciler of Oni Press' *The Coffin*, and writer Andy Lieberman, combine their twisted intellects to revamp DC's *Harley Quinn*.

"I'm really excited to be working on *Harley Quinn*," said Huddleston. "When I read the scripts and saw the direction the book was taking, I knew it would be a lot of fun."



The new team kicks off their run with issue #26, with Troy Nixey as inker and Sean Konot as letterer.

Huddleston's putting his enchanted pencils to work to make *Harley Quinn* much more down and dirty.

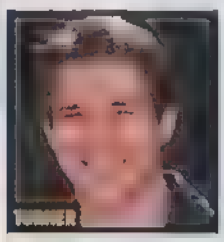
"*Harley Quinn* reads like a crime novel," says Huddleston. "To try to get that tough, gritty look I've been paying attention to [Frank] Miller's work on *Sin City* and [Eduardo] Risso's work on *100 Bullets*. Andy is giving a real edge to the book and to Harley herself, so hopefully my work will enhance that." ■ CM

MICHAEL RE-TURNER

Recovered artist finishes 'Fathom' tour

The *Fathom* ship finally steams into its final ports of call.

Back in April of 2000, superstar Top Cow artist Michael Turner cooked up a wild promotion for *Fathom* #12. Stores that ordered 1,000+ copies would get Turner for an in-store signing appearance. The response was overwhelming, and Turner booked 31 tour stops.



Unfortunately, halfway through the tour, Turner was diagnosed with and treated for cancer. Now, after a full year's battle back, Turner is making the final step in his recovery by finishing the last 13 stops. "It feels really good to be *fully* back in action," Turner said. "I had to get things going on *Fathom* again first. Now the upside is, I'm really looking forward to doing the tour again."

The 13 remaining stops include stores in Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Idaho, Washington, Nevada and California. The tour starts in late September, and wraps in late October. Specific dates and places can be found on Top Cow's Website, **www.topcow.com**.

While on the road, Turner will bring a lapboard and do some work—he's supplementing his *Fathom* duties by drawing October's *Tomb Raider* #25, and developing two new mini series. Keep your eyes open for me on the highway," he laughs. "I'll have some new books I'm working on, and you might be the first to see them." ■ JIM McLAUCHLIN

Liefeld's stumbles

THE NEVER-ENDING 'BATTLE'

Top Cow Productions is expanding its Battle plans

The publisher is capitalizing on its hit *Battle of the Planets* ongoing by adding a series of one-shots and crossovers to its publishing slate, all with regular *BotP* scribe Mumer Sharrieff at the reins. The added action starts in December with *Battle of the Planets: Princess*, a one-shot featuring the female lead...and a special guest-star

"It's a Witchblade crossover," Sharrieff said. "But I'm kind of playing that down, because I really don't want this to come across as a 'crossover.' Sara Pezzini won't even appear; just the Witchblade. It's really a futuristic retelling of the Joan of Arc story."

Jo Chin (*Darkminds*) provides art for *BotP: Princess*, with *BotP: Mark* and *BotP: Jason* one-shots set to follow in January and February, written by Sharrieff with artists yet to be determined.

That timeframe will also see a two-issue *BotP/Thundercats* crossover, teaming Top Cow and WildStorm's cartoon sensations. No word yet on the WildStorm half, but Sharrieff has plans to take the G-Force crew and the Thundercats 20 years into the future. "Lion-O will have silver in his mane," Sharrieff said. "I'd like to fit the Thundercats into the 'Battle of the Planets' universe, but do so in the future, so it doesn't mess with things. ■ JMd.

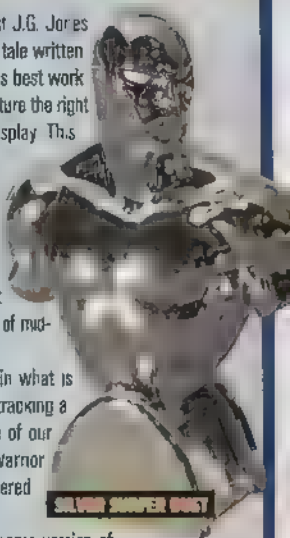
HEAT INDEX

No one loves comics like *Wizard* so here's some cool things we read and saw this month.

WONDER WOMAN: THE HIKETEIA (DC) It took artist J.G. Jones (*Marvel Boy*) 10 months to draw this 90-page Wonder Woman tale written by Greg Rucka (*Detective Comics*), and boy, does it show. In his best work yet, Jones puts his keen attention to detail, amazing ability to capture the right facial expressions and his knack for dynamic storytelling on display. This is one J.G. Jones opus you won't want to miss.

ULTIMATES #5 (Marvel) This is the best Avengers-style movie sequence we could ever imagine! Writer Mark Millar makes Hulk one bad mutha, creating truly palpable tension. Scenes where Giant-Man's underestimating the Hulk results in some dental work, and Iron Man being shredded like Tin Man actually made us nervous reading it. Artist Bryan Hitch really outdid himself crafting a photo-realistic rendition of mid-town Manhattan being demolished by the Hulk.

HAWKMAN #5 (DC Comics) Artist Rags Morales shines in what is clearly the series' best issue! Green Arrow comes to St. Roch tracking a killer, and the Emerald Archer's run-in with Hawkman is one of our favorite moments of the year—especially when the Winged Warrior slaps G.A. upside the head with his mace, in a wonderfully rendered two-page splash panel by Morales.



CHROME SILVER SURFER (Bowen Designs) This chrome version of Bowen's Silver Surfer bust (above) kicks cosmic butt! The shine on this piece can be seen from outer space, and since it's limited to just 500 copies, it's flying off the shelves at warp speed. If you can get your greedy little hands on this bad boy, put it in a Galactus-sized death grip!

Y—THE LAST MAN #1 (Vertigo/DC) Being the last man on Earth may *sound* like a good gig—especially when there are still three billion women alive—but with this story, writer Brian K. Vaughan shows the nightmarish flipside to that coin. The premise of this book blew us away, as a mysterious malady kills every male—human and animal—on Earth, except for Yorick Brown, an unemployed English major and part-time escape artist. What's behind the mass deaths is still part of the mystery, one we can't wait to see unfold!

TIME DETECTIVE When Batman exists [illegible] Abraham Lincoln administers [illegible] September's *Detective* [illegible] Michael Uslan (producer of the [illegible] films) with pencils by Peter [illegible] which finds Bruce Wayne taking [illegible] detective mantle throughout [illegible] time.

MARVEL EXCLUSIVES [illegible] *Avengers* rancher Gary Frank [illegible] Hulk writer Bruce Jones have both [illegible] exclusive deals with Marvel.

COVER UP [illegible] cover artist supreme Scott Campbell (*Battle of the Planets*, *He-Man*) and former *Iron Man* artist [illegible] Brent Anderson will contribute covers to Dreamwave Productions' new *Artifarium* series.

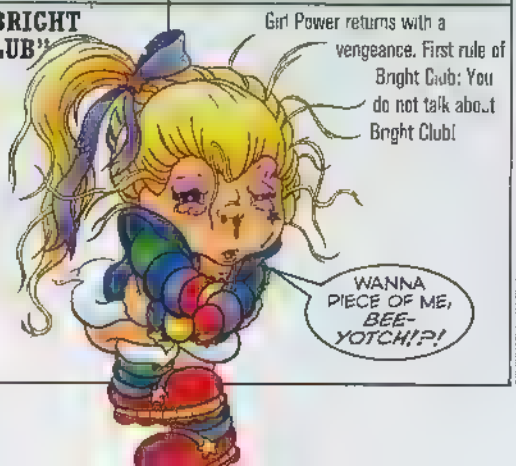
DARK HORSE REVEALS If you happen to be a comic fan with [illegible] tastes, then Dark Horse's new anthology title *Revelations* might be right up your alley. Debuting in October, the monthly anthology features all-new stories by Dark Horse staples Buffy and Lone Wolf [illegible] along with stories by the best in small press comics. Making sure all bases are covered, *Revelations* will [illegible] never-before-seen comics work by Pablo [illegible] (yes, that Pablo Picasso!).

LOBO'S BACK [illegible] otherworldly bastich Lobo is back [illegible] six-issue [illegible] *Lobo's Big Christmas* kicking off [illegible] year. Written by Keith Giffen, *Knights of the Dinner Table*, with art by Alan Harris (*Heavy Metal*), DC promises that if you think Lobo offended people before, you [illegible] seeing yet.

GOING IN CIRCLES Amy Schneider, the [illegible] Sam & Dean Go to Hell, returns to [illegible] with *Sam & Dean Go to Hell (Circle Comics Full Circle)*, [illegible] original series [illegible] Amy and [illegible] guidance counselor confronted by an all-new threat.

SPINNING OUT OF CONTROL

With both G.I. Joe and Transformers spawning multiple titles and rumors running rampant about spinoff books based on Battle of the Planets, Thundercats and the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles—retro-mania is in full gear. Being the trend-setting hipsters that we are, *Wizard* decided to throw in its two cents with the '80s spinoffs that we'd like to see next.

PROPERTY	SPIN-OFF	PREMISE
G.I. JOE	"MTV DIARY: I'M A COBRA TROOPER"	See what a day in the life's like for an aspiring member of the world's most ruthless terrorist organization. Join Crimson Guard member Fred VII for a day full of hazing brainwashing and kicking puppies.
BATTLE OF THE PLANETS	"O.G. FORCE"	The East and West Coast set aside their differences to defend the Earth from the evil alien menace Spectra. The fearless Ol' Dirty Bastard leads original gangstas Suge Knight (the muscle), Lil' Kim (the beauty), DMX (the impetuous one) and Bow Wow (comic relief) in this action-packed series.
TRANSFORMERS	"TRANSPOTTING"	Hooked on Energon, Wreck-Gar and his fellow Junkions cruise the junkyards of the galaxy, jonesin' for their latest fix.
G.I. JOE	"THE REAL WORLD SYDNEY: STARRING THE DREADNOKS"	See what happens when these Cobra mercs stop being nice and start being real. The cameras capture all the real-life drama as the grape soda swilling, chocolate donut scarfing Aussie bikers argue about chores, stab each other in the back (literally) and eventually learn to love one another despite their differences.
THUNDERCATS	"THE E! TRUE HOLLYWOOD STORY: WILY KIT AND KAT"	Follow the rise and fall of the most popular underage twins since Mary Kate and Ashley Olsen. This one-shot chronicles the supercats' rise to prominence during the Thundercats heyday as well as depressing falls from grace, like Wily Kat being administered to the Betty Ford Clinic for an addiction to catnip and Wily Kit's fatherless litter of nine.
HE-MAN	"HORDAK'S HEROES"	Imprisoned by the Eternian guard, the evil warlord Hordak and the lovable members of his Evil Horde pass the time driving Man-At-Arms and the bumbling Ram-Man crazy with their scampish hijinks. "Hordak!"
RAINBOW BRIGHT	"BRIGHT CLUB"  Girl Power returns with a vengeance. First rule of Bright Club: You do not talk about Bright Club! WANNA PIECE OF ME, BEE-YOTCH!?!	

KURT RUSSELL 'SNAKES' HIS WAY INTO COMICS

'Escape from New York' comic highlights new CrossGen Entertainment line

Snake Plisskin may have escaped New York and L.A. but he couldn't elude Hurricane or CrossGen Entertainment any longer.

Hurricane Entertainment, the team behind Image Comics' cult hit *Violent Messiahs*, recently acquired a license from film director John Carpenter to bring Snake Plisskin and characters from Carpenter's 1981 hit film "Escape From New York" to comics. *John Carpenter's Snake Plisskin Chronicles* starts as a four-issue mini-series under the new CrossGen Entertainment banner.

The new *Snake Plisskin* deal, along with the recently announced movement of the very successful *Red Star* title to CG Entertainment, is exactly what CrossGen founder Mark Alessi wanted when he formed the imprint, along with another new CrossGen line called Code 6.

"We'd be foolish and arrogant to believe that CrossGen's creators are the only people out there creating great comics," explained Alessi.

CG Entertainment is a new publishing entity that will publish non-CrossGen Universe projects. Code 6 Comics is another new imprint created for the purpose of publishing non-CrossGen continuity titles by creators who are willing to share ownership of the project with CrossGen.

Violent Messiahs co-creator William O'Neill will write *The Snake Plisskin Chronicles*, while *VM* penciler Tone Rodriguez draws the series, slated for a first quarter 2003 release.

"We're dealing specifically with Snake Plisskin," said Hurricane CEO Jan Utstein-O'Neill. "We will be working closely with John and [Snake Plisskin actor] Kurt Russell and consulting with them on plot points."

Hurricane even had to ferry plots to Russell, who was on a boat moving his family to Canada at the time the contracts were signed. The mutual series will pick up, "literally the morning after the 'Escape From New York' movie, as he lands in Atlantic City," said writer O'Neill. Future mini-series are yet to be worked out, but O'Neill is looking forward to mining the mythology.

"I'm a big, big fan of the movie," he says. "I was an early teenager when it first came out, and it was one of those dark, grown-up films that you'd catch on HBO at 1 a.m.. It's always been a favorite of mine. I can't wait to do even more." ■ JMd. & MC

THE POOP ON DOOP

Wolverine re-teams with X-Statix blob

Wolverine's fought ninjas, bagged X-Babes and even had a team-up with the Wendigo—but is the big, hairy Canadian ready for another night out with *X-Statix*'s Doop?

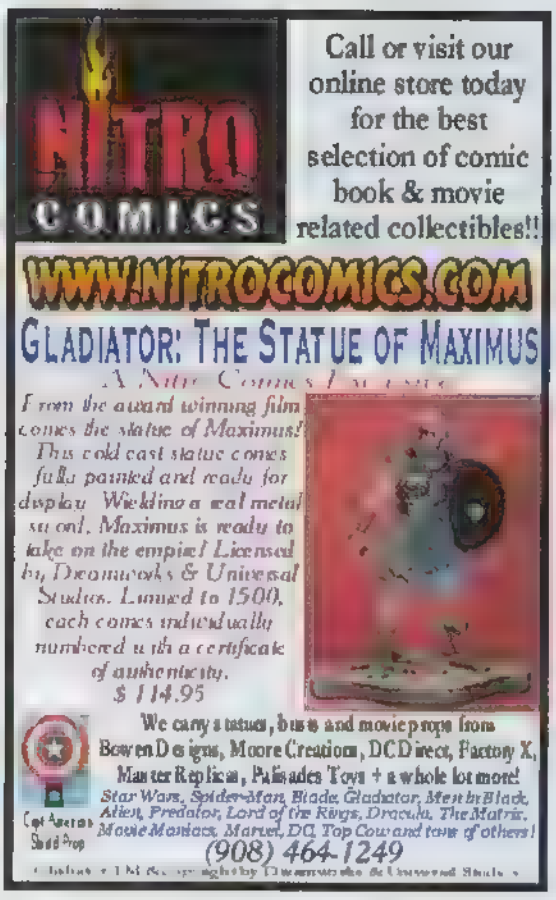
Well, ready or not, here he comes.

The X-Men's most popular member and *X-Statix*'s breakout star re-team in a crossover planned for next year by *X Statix* scribe Peter Milligan and *Catwoman* artist Darwyn Cooke.

For those of you Doop-challenged, the *X-Statix* (formerly *X Force*) character is a green, mutant blob who speaks in a language indiscernible to readers but understood by those closest to him. According to *X-Statix* and *Wolverine* editor Axel Alonso, the entire story spun out of the first published Wolverine/Doop meeting in last year's *X-Force* #120. The farcical issue featured Doop and Wolverine sitting at a bar talking—except readers couldn't understand what the heck Doop was saying.

"Darwyn [Cooke] loved the Wolverine cameo and got the joke," explained Alonso. "He said he'd be interested in doing an *X Force* spinoff. I mentioned it to Peter [Milligan], who suggested a Wolverine/Doop crossover. And Darwyn said 'Hell yeah.'"

Originally planned as a graphic novel, Alonso said Marvel will now likely release the team-up as a two-issue mini-series that will be fully painted by Cooke. "We haven't decided on a format yet," said Alonso of the still in-development project. "But it breaks nicely into two beats. Fans of *X-Statix* and Doop won't be disappointed." ■ MC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ALEX ROSS HAS A 'SECRET'

Ross, Paul Dini tell JLA origin tales in November one-shot

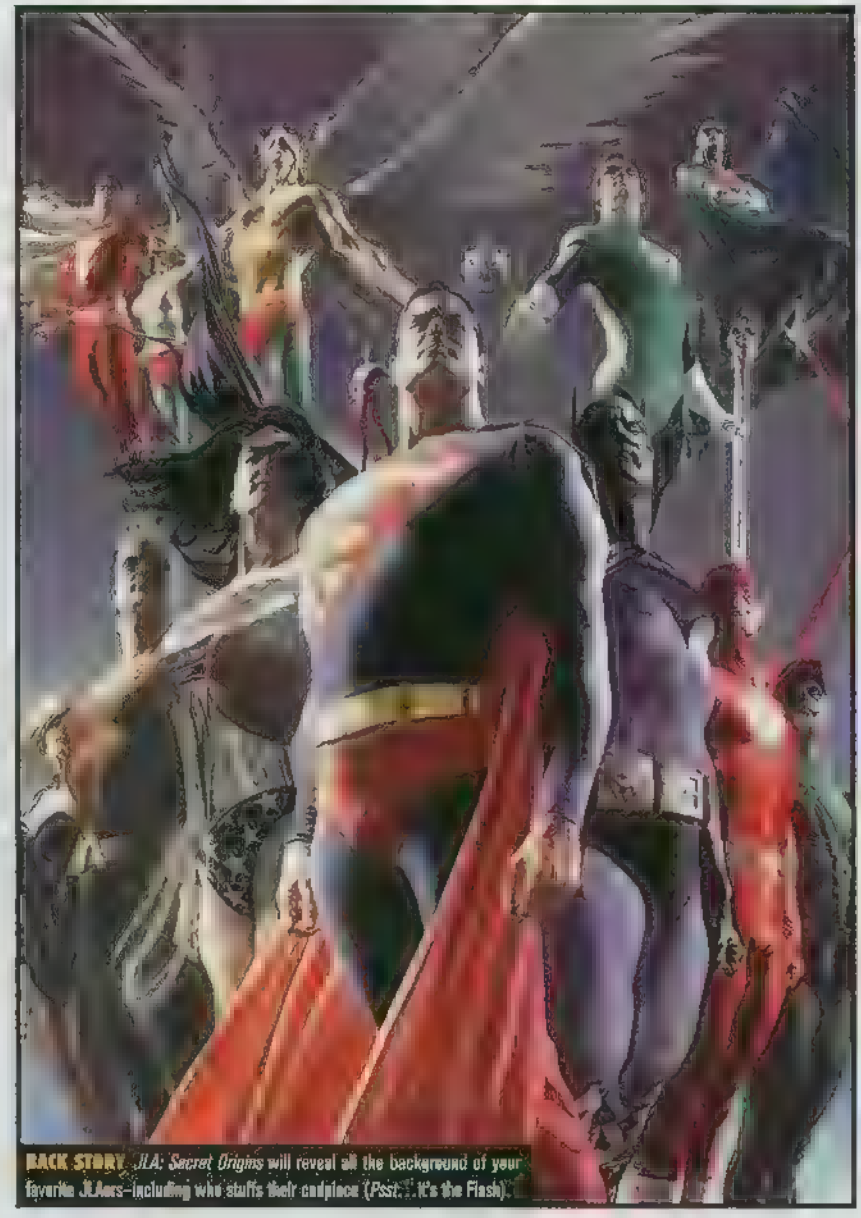
Alex Ross and Paul Dini have decided to strike while the iron is hot.

Based on the success of the creative duo's series of tabloid-sized books (which include *Batman: War on Crime*, *Superman: Peace on Earth*, *Wonder Woman: Spirit of Truth* and *Shazam!: Power of Hope*) DC has announced a new addition to the line of prestigious one-shots. Shipping this November, *JLA: Secret Origins* not only collects origin sequences from the four previous one-shots, but also includes origin tales of several other members of the JLA.

"*Secret Origins* tells the origins of the remainder of the classic Justice League, that being Hal Jordan/Green Lantern, Barry Allen/Flash and the old-style Aquaman, just to name a few," explained Ross. "We're doing the big enchilada of the Justice League in two-page, fully painted spreads."

Ross is quick to admit that condensing the origins of characters like Green Lantern and Flash—characters with rich back stories—into two-page spreads was indeed a daunting task, but one he and Dini happily took on.

"It's fairly intimate portraits of each character's history, and Paul and I carefully picked through the material to determine what's the most important things about each character," said Ross.



BACK STORY *JLA: Secret Origins* will reveal all the background of your favorite JLAers—including who stuffs their cadpiece (Psst... it's the Flash).

The original plan was to tell each JLA member's origin in a one-shot similar to the previous four, according to Ross. However, thanks to an upcoming untitled JLA one-shot scheduled for next year, he and Dini decided to speed up the process and simply include all of the stories in *Secret Origins*.

"My original intentions were to do the additional characters' origins the same way Paul and I did Superman, Batman and so on, then jump into next year's big JLA project," said Ross. "Then I thought that that was a lot of origins just to get to one story. So this project was birthed out of that, and in essence, to tease and promote the following book."

Promotion aside, with *Secret Origins*, Ross hopes to once again prove that he's still the be all, end all in terms of comic painters, and that he's much more than just a cover artist.

"I want to be able to sell a book that I do the interior art for and using DC characters as well as something like *Battle of the Planets*—which I only do covers for," explained Ross. "If that doesn't work, then I'll go do a fully painted *Battle of the Planets* story. I'm using the most well known characters in the universe [with *Secret Origins*], and if I can't make that a success, then I don't know what to tell ya." ■ **CASEY SEIJAS**

BY JAMES MCDONOUGH

VICE SQUADS

DC'S TWO SUPERTEAMS COLLIDE IN THIS *EXCLUSIVE* PREVIEW OF *JLA/JSA: VIRTUE AND VICE*

Sure, the JLA and JSA may be dedicated to justice, but that doesn't mean they can't get a little vileness in their veins. If you think this sounds like a job for Superman—think again. "This isn't one of those stories where Superman or Batman shows up and saves the day," explains co-writer Geoff Johns. "This falls on everyone, and it'll take everyone to overcome it."

Thus the stage is set for December's *JLA/JSA: Virtue and Vice*, a prestige, 96-page hardcover from JSA superscribes David Goyer and Johns and artist Carlos Pacheco (*Fantastic Four*). This dream project opened the doors for the creative team's fanboy fantasies to run wild.

"We decided to throw in everyone but the kitchen sink," boasts Goyer. "We asked, 'What are the scenes or moments that we as fans want to see?' We tried to nail as many as possible."

The earth-shattering events unfold as seven members of the JSA and JLA become possessed by the original enemies of man, a.k.a. the Seven Deadly Sins, forcing the remaining heroes to band together and stop their comrades' evil ways.

"It was really a natural extension of the characters, so we went through the list and picked out the ones that we felt most tied into sin," reveals Johns. "Plastic Man is Greed, because he used to be a crook. Batman is Anger, because people see him as an angry hero. Terrific is Pride, because he's slightly arrogant."

For those keeping score, the remaining sins divvy up like this: Power Girl is Lust, Doctor Fate is Sloth, Captain Marvel is Gluttony and Green Lantern is Envy.

Complicating matters further is the fact that our heroes' new-found negativity spreads. "It's like a big telepathic virus," says Johns. "It exudes out of them and infects other people. Batman's anger causes riots, while Doctor Fate puts the whole city of Seattle into a coma."

But with an entire universe chock full of planet-smashing menaces like Darkseid and Doomsday, why pit comics' mightiest heroes against one another?

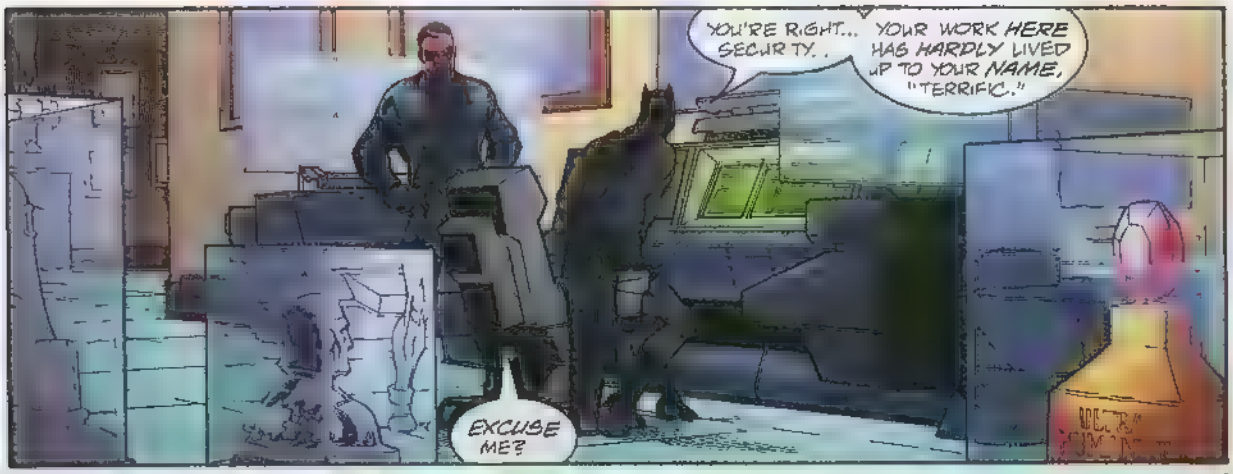
"With *JLA/JSA*, it's about the characters," reasons Johns. "You want to do more than just have them fighting invaders from Mars or whatever. That's why we made some of these characters bad guys. It makes things personal."

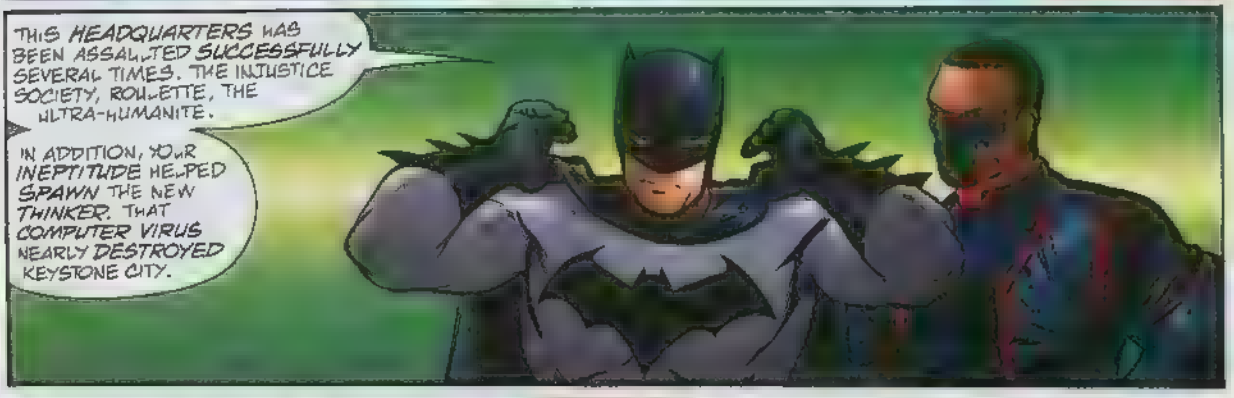
What excites the writers even more than playing with their favorite heroes is the opportunity to work alongside Pacheco, one of their favorite artists. "We're drooling every time his pages come in over the fax machine," laughs Goyer. "When we heard that he wanted to come aboard, it was a no-brainer."

The sinnin' kicks off when the two superteams gather together for a little Thanksgiving celebration at the JSA's HQ following an aborted attack by Baron Bedlam. Ready to see what happens when legends collide? Then dust off your cape, take a deep breath and check out this exclusive 11-page preview of *JLA/JSA: Virtue and Vice*!

THIS ATTACK DOESN'T MAKE SENSE.
LUTHOR'S BEEN BRAGGING ABOUT HIS NON-AGGRESSION PACT WITH APOKOLIPS FOR MONTHS
I WOULDN'T PUT MUCH FAITH INTO WHAT OUR PRESIDENT SAYS
BUT HAWKMAN'S RIGHT. WHY MAKE WAVES NOW?
ESPECIALLY WITH A LUNKHEAD LIKE BEDLAM? I MEAN COME ON, WHAT WERE THEY THINKING?
THERE WAS DEFINITELY MORE TO IT DURING THE BATTLE. I FELT SOMETHING ELSE
MY TELEPATHY IS ALWAYS ACTIVE. THOUGHTS OF THOSE AROUND ME FLOWING THROUGH MY HEAD LIKE A CONSTANT STATIC
I USUALLY TUNE THEM OUT--
- BUT IN AFRICA SOMETHING WAS BLINDING ME BLURRING MY ABILITY TO HEAR YOUR THOUGHTS

THE ORIGINAL ATOM. THEY MAKE YOU YOUNGER MEMBERS STUDY ALL TH S, RIGHT? HE WAS A TOUGH LITTLE GUY.
YOU HEAR THAT, JAKEEM? NO NEED TO BE ASHAMED FOR BEIN' SHORT.
HF.
YEAH, STAR. THANKS A LOT, ATOM.
THESE OLDER COSTUMES WERE PRETTY LAME .F YOU ASK ME.
I MEAN, LOOK AT THE ORIGINAL MR. TERRIFIC HERE--I WOULDN T BE CAUGHT DEAD WEARING THAT
'LEAST HE S NOT WEAR N' NO DOG COLLAR
HEM
LET'S TABLE DR. BEDLAM FOR NOW. I'D RATHER FOCUS ON THE MATTER AT HAND.
AGREED, THE PURPOSE OF THIS MEETING WAS TO FOSTER A CLOSER WORKING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR TWO TEAMS.
WELL...THE WISEST TH NG TO DO IS CONCEN- TRATE ON THE ELEMENTS THAT MAKE UP A GOOD PARTNERSHIP.
COMMUNICATION TRUST.
GIVEN THE CONSTANT INFLUX OF CLASSIFIED INFORMATION AND PERSONAL DATA FLOWING BETWEEN OUR TEAMS, I THINK SECURITY SHOULD BE A MAIN PRIORITY.


YOU'RE RIGHT... SECURITY.
YOUR WORK HERE HAS HARDLY LIVED UP TO YOUR NAME, "TERRIFIC."
EXCUSE ME?


THIS HEADQUARTERS HAS BEEN ASSAULTED SUCCESSFULLY SEVERAL TIMES. THE INJUSTICE SOCIETY, ROULETTE, THE ULTRA-HUMANITE.
IN ADDITION, YOUR INEPTITUDE HELPED SPAWN THE NEW THINKER. THAT COMPUTER VIRUS NEARLY DESTROYED KEYSTONE CITY.

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, BATMAN, THE JLA WATCHTOWER'S BEEN COMPROMISED MORE TIMES THAN I'D CARE TO ENUMERATE.
AND CORRECT ME IF I'M WRONG--
- BUT WASN'T IT YOUR OWN PARANOID CONTINGENCY PLANS THAT RECENTLY JEOPARDIZED YOUR TEAMMATES DURING THE WHOLE RAS AL GHUL FIASCO?

WHAT IN HERA'S NAME HAS GOTTEN INTO YOU TWO? THERE ARE NO ENEMIES HERE
WONDER WOMAN'S RIGHT. BACK OFF. BOTH OF--

KRAKK
HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND, TERRIFIC?!
NAH--
--JUST OUR PATIENCE!
SMASH
THAT'S ENOUGH, KYLE!
STAND DOWN NOW, OR SO HELP ME--
--YOU'LL DO WHAT? BORE ME TO DEATH WITH STORIES ABOUT THE OLD DAYS?
YOU HAD YOUR DAY IN THE SUN, SENTINEL.
I'M GREEN LANTERN NOW.

I AM!
FWASHOOM
KRUSH
DON'T ARE YOU-
--MIND ON FIRE--
SOME KIND OF PSYCHIC ATTACK--
--LOSING CONTROL OF MY BODY--

--NNNARRRLLLHHH!!!
J'ONN!
OH, KAL
POWER G.R.--, WHAT--?
SAY "AH."
YUM.
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE--?
ROCKING YOUR WORLD, SUPERMAN.
THWAMM

YOU KNOW, I MAY HAVE TAUGHT YA A LOT OF THINGS, KIDDO.
BUT FIGHTING DIRTY--
--I KEPT THOSE MOVES TO MYSELF.
YOU DON'T KNOW A THING ABOUT FIGHTING DIRTY, GRANT
KRAK
USE YOUR WILLPOWER, SON. FIGHT IT-- WHATEVER IT IS.
DON'T PATRONIZE ME, SENTINEL. I'M THE LAST ONE LEFT. THE LAST GREEN LANTERN.
IT'S YOU THAT SHOULD BE TAKING POINTERS FROM ME.
EH--? TERRIFIC?
SINCE YOUR POWERS HAVE A NATURAL WEAKNESS TO ANYTHING WOODEN, I WAS CURIOUS WHAT WOULD HAPPEN--

--IF YOU INHALED A CLOUD OF CELLULOSE PARTICLES!
FASHH
NMMMPHH
SENTINEL!
CHOOM
CHOOM
CHOOM
THE WHOLE HEADQUARTERS IS COMING DOWN!
NEVER MIND THAT, WE NEED TO EVACUATE THE--
HEY!

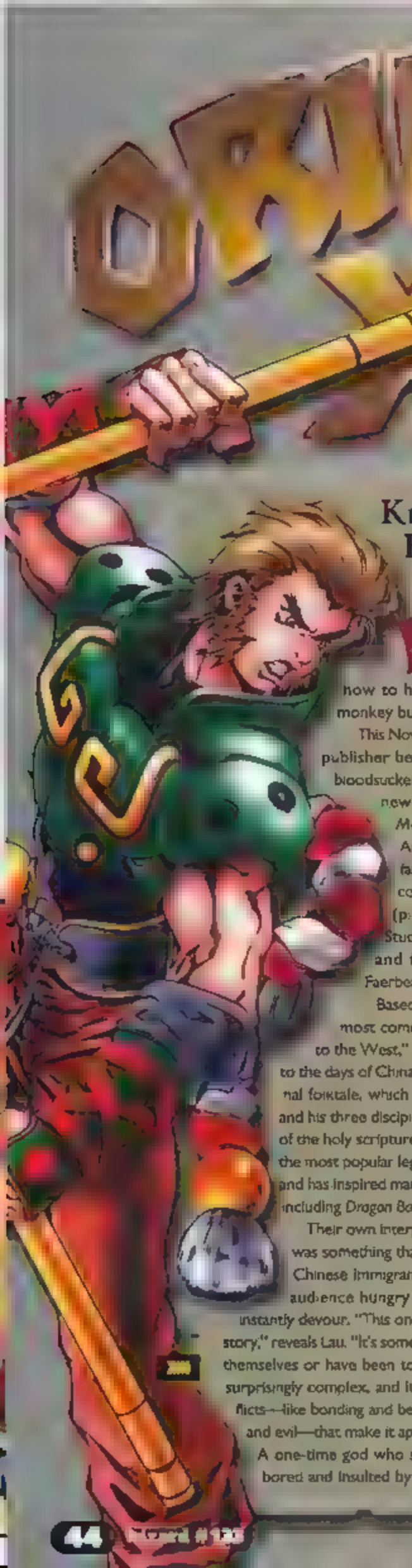
JACK?!
CHECK IT OUT SPEEDY'S HAT!
KNOW HOW MUCH I CAN GET ON EBAY FOR THIS THING?
CHA-CHING!
TAKE CARE OF THEM, FATE FINISH THEM OFF
WHY MAKE THE EFFORT?
BECAUSE I'M ASKING, FATE.
IF I MUST. BUT I HAVE TO TELL YOU, I'M FINDING ALL OF THIS--
-- FAR TOO TEDIOUS!
FRIZZ

--WHERE?
NOT GOOD I'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE.
YEAH WE JUST GOT DUMPED INTO DR FATE'S TOWER.

KRRRKOOM!!
GET BACK! GET--
A PHILOSOPHER ONCE SAID--
--"THERE ARE ONLY TWO KINDS OF MEN: THE RIGHTEOUS WHO THINK THEY ARE SINNERS AND THE SINNERS WHO THINK THEY ARE RIGHTEOUS."
WE?... UH... WHICH ONES ARE WE, BATS?
TAKE YOUR PICK.
WANT MORE? CHECK OUT JLA/JSA: VIRTUE AND VICE ON SALE DECEMBER 4!

ORIGINAL XIN

BY JAMES McDONOUGH



Kung Fu fighting, monkey kings and Kevin Lau load up for WIZARD's exclusive preview of 'Xin'

When it comes to his latest series, Kevin Lau knows how to handle his business—his monkey business, that is.

This November, Harris Comics, the publisher best known for its buxom bloodsucker *Vampirella*, debuts its all-new title, *Xin: Legend of the Monkey King* from Lau's Anarchy Studios. The new fantasy-themed series comes courtesy of *Vampi* artist Lau (plots and pencils), Udon Studios' Erik Ko (co-plotter) and features scripts by Jay Faerber (*Noble Causes*).

Based on an ancient folk legend most commonly known as "Journey to the West," the roots of *Xin* date back to the days of China's Ming Dynasty. The original folktale, which centered around a monk and his three disciples' quest to India in search of the holy scriptures of Buddha, is revered as the most popular legend in Chinese mythology and has inspired many modern-day properties, including *Dragon Ball Z*.

Their own interpretation of this classic tale was something that both Lau and Ko (fellow Chinese immigrants) felt a North American audience hungry for Asian culture would instantly devour. "This one is our favorite childhood story," reveals Lau. "It's something all Chinese have read themselves or have been told as a bedtime story. It's surprisingly complex, and it's the story's human conflicts—like bonding and betrayal and a sense of good and evil—that make it appealing."

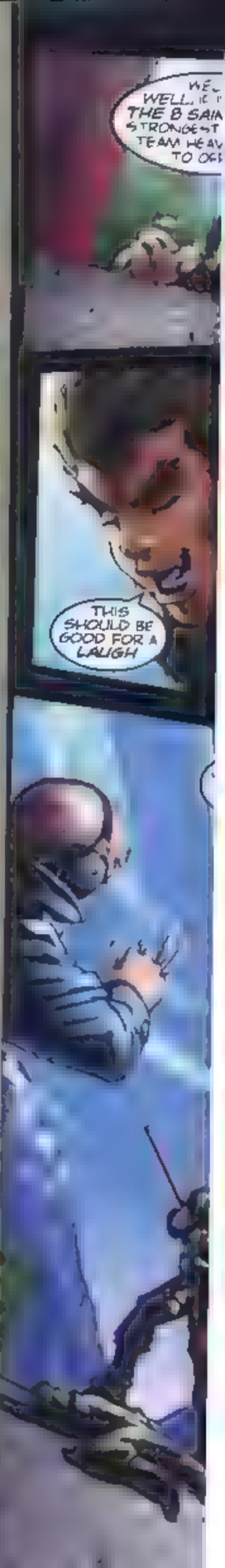
A one-time god who split heaven after growing bored and insulted by his menial duties, Xin is a powerful, yet arrogant warrior on the road to redemption. After returning to Heaven in a spiteful rage, an angry Xin destroys the Light that maintains the Gate of Evil. Upon the Light's destruction, the gate opens and evil is spread throughout the land. Realizing his mistake, the young god partakes a journey toward the West in order to close the gates. However, our hero isn't taking this kung fu road trip alone; he'll meet up with a colorful cast of characters, including Sanzen, a human god possessing the purest heart whose strong spiritual energy is instrumental in closing the Gate and controlling the Light.

Xin will also encounter plenty of headaches, namely from his archrival and fellow god General Ji, a.k.a. G2. Having been rivals since childhood, it's Heaven's selection of G2 as the Light's guardian that originally enraged Xin. Xin will also receive the occasional divine intervention from the unstoppable defensive force known as the 8 Saints.

The series promises to give readers more of an "Eastern" flavor than fantasy titles like *Warlands* and *Sojourn*. "Most of the fantasy books in the market share Western themes," explains Ko. "You know Greek myths, knights, fire-breathing dragons, etc. Our book will have more of an oriental flare in terms of look, design elements and feel."

And though Lau is known as something of a four-color John Woo when it comes to killer action sequences, the artist hints that he may switch his M.O. up a bit for this book. "There'll be more hand-to-hand action than firearm shootouts," laughs Lau. "Everything will be more martial arts inspired. It is a lot more work for me, but I think it's something that will appeal to the fans."

Can't wait to see the Monkey King in action? Then swing to the next page and go bananas over this exclusive three-page *Xin: Legend of the Monkey King* preview. The story thus far: Xin has encountered the 8 Saints, the protectors of the pearly gates, where our heroic Monkey King is currently going "ape" sh-- on the eternal warriors.



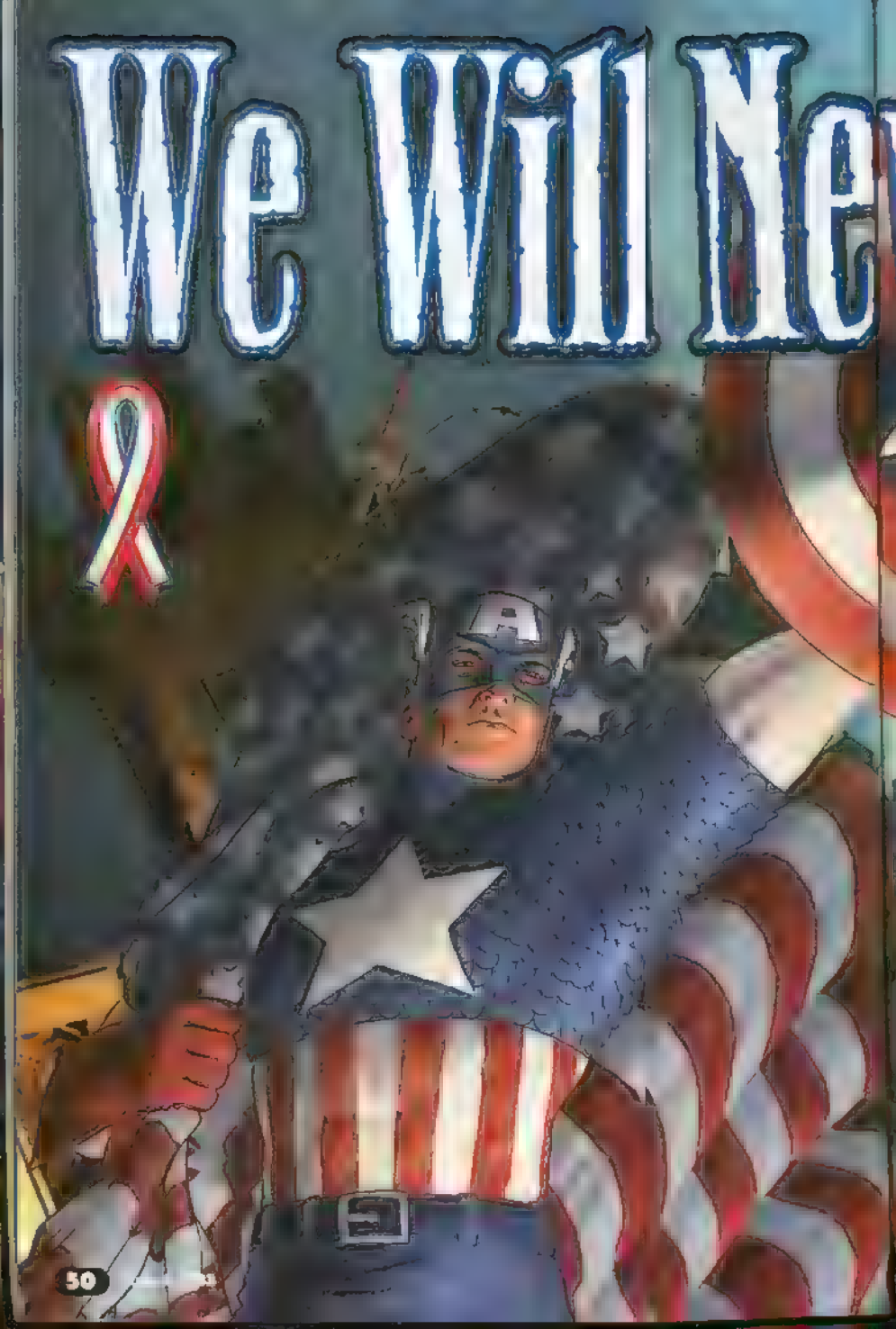
WELL, WELL, IF IT ISN'T THE 8 SAINTS, THE STRONGEST ASSAULT TEAM HEAVEN HAS TO OFFER.
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S A JOKE!
THIS SHOULD BE GOOD FOR A LAUGH
MY BROTHER AND I WILL BE ABLE TO TAKE YOU DOWN WITHOUT ANY HELP FROM THE OTHER SAINTS!
THINK YOU CAN JUST IGNORE US, EH?
WELL, WE'RE NOT THE ROOKIE KIDS YOU REMEMBER.
BLUES AND I ONCE TOOK ON AN ENTIRE ARMY OF

WHA--?
HE, HE'S GONE!
BUT, HE WAS RIGHT HERE!
FIGURES THAT HE'D RUN AWAY FROM US.
UH, SIS.
SSH. I'M THINKING!
HE'S FAST, BUT HE'S NOT THAT FAST WHICH MEANS HE COULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN TOO FAR --
YOU'RE RIGHT!
Y'KNOW, I WISH YOU WERE A LITTLE MORE LIKE YOUR BROTHER. AT LEAST HE KNOWS HOW TO KEEP HIS MOUTH SHUT.

CALL ME CRAZY
BUT I THINK LITTLE GIRLS SHOULD BE SEEN AND NOT HEARD.
OKAY, I'M ALREADY BORED. YOU GUYS ARE THE ELITE BRANCH OF AN ORGANIZATION THAT SAFEGUARDS OUR ENTIRE WORLD FROM THE FORCES OF EVIL
PERHAPS THIS WOULD BE MORE INTERESTING FOR EVERYONE NVOLVED
IF YOU ALL JUST CAME AT ME AT ONCE, OR SOMETHING.
AWWW, YEAH...
THAT'S MORE LIKE IT.
LIKE IT SO FAR? CHECK OUT X/N#1 ON SALE NOV. 6!

We Will Never Forget

By Mike Cotton



Haunted by the horrific images of September 11, John Cassaday and John Ney Rieber overhaul Captain America to reflect the turbulent world of terrorism

On a small pier near 66th Street in Manhattan, a little over 100 desperate people huddle close together, listening to small radios and trying furiously to make calls on their failing cell phones.

The first World Trade Center Tower fell just minutes earlier, and the second Tower now oozed billowing black smoke mixed with lapping flames of destruction. A million questions raced through the minds of the gathered New Yorkers. Were friends, family and co-workers okay? Was the U.S. at war? Was this some terrible accident, or another act of senseless violence directed at America by radical religious or political extremists?

Fighter jets began circling over Manhattan and frazzled New Yorkers wearily looked to the sky, worried more attacks

were imminent.

The radios squawked loudly, as the sounds of sirens and mass confusion buffeted them from all sides. The 100 or so people gathered near the Hudson River strained to hear every word they could.

Then, the second tower fell.

"I felt like I was watching it in slow motion. I felt all reason slip away," remembers *Captain America* artist John Cassaday, a New Yorker who stood beside his fellow Gothamites on the pier just blocks from his Upper West Side apartment. "It's not like watching CNN. Knowing you're watching thousands of people die instantly, you just can't understand it.

"[As the second tower collapsed] a young woman bellowed out a gut-wrenching scream and dropped to her knees. People helped hold her up. They held her. I guessed at the time that she must know someone working in the tower—someone who was now dead. Out of more than a hundred people there, she's the one I remember."

Feeling helpless and lost, Cassaday wandered home. But he found no solace there. Instead, he found his phone dead and an answering machine full of messages from worried friends and family. The 30-year-old artist refused to heed the radio and television's advisory telling people to stay away from the lower Manhattan area—instead, he began walking towards the fires, the dust, the devastation and the death.

"I started towards the Red Cross to give blood," says Cassaday softly. "There was a line around the block and they had started turning people away. They told us to come back the next day. I had nowhere to go and refused to head back home to the TV, so I headed downtown. I got fairly close, but can't say for sure because surrounding buildings were still falling down and the police were blocking off the streets fairly quickly. In spite of all that was going on, it seemed very quiet. The streets were gray, all covered in dust. So were the people. Gray like ghosts."

"The streets were gray, all covered in dust. So were the people. Gray like ghosts."

—JOHN CASSADAY,
***Captain America* artist, upon approaching Ground Zero on Sept. 11**

FROM THE ASHES

Weeks later, Cassaday, like most, still found himself haunted by the destruction at Ground Zero. If the images weren't on television or the Internet, they ravaged his mind. The cold, gray, silence of Sept. 11 still tormented the artist day in and day out—night after night.

But Cassaday coped like many other artists after 9/11, by putting the imagery of that day into his artwork.

"The truth is, I told [*Captain America* editor] Stuart Moore that I wasn't sure if I would still do the book," reveals Cassaday a year after the Sept. 11 attacks on New York and Washington, D.C. "I spent a few days thinking that comics—superheroes in particular—were absolutely trivia

"It took me a while to settle back into reality, lower my adrenaline a bit and get my head together. The story we were working on before the bombing seemed so pointless suddenly. We knew that if we were going to do *Captain America*, it must have a new relevance."

What was to be the launching point of Marvel Knights' new *Captain America* series, a story entitled "The Extremist," was pushed back to issue #7. *Cap* writer John Ney Rieber and Cassaday began discussing how to create a Captain America tale that would face the current events of 9/11 head on without capitalizing on the tragedy of the events.

The tandem took the pain endured from the attacks and transformed it into a passionate tale simply titled "Enemy." Cassaday tapped into his own memories of the silent streets and their dusty

denizens he saw in lower Manhattan on 9/11. "That's how I wanted to present the first half of *Captain America* #1," Cassaday recalls, "quiet and gray."

"John [Cassaday] saw more of the worst parts of [Sept. 11] than most of us did. He saw the parts that weren't televised," says *Cap* editor Moore. "I think he was really shaken by it. I think he had to know that *Cap* was a noble and worthwhile project and not a trivializing thing."

The artist and writer spent hours on the phone and trading e-mails about how the new Captain America would tackle the sensitive subjects of Sept. 11. But there was no bickering over ideas or arguing about motivation or scene selection—instead, the two found a perfectly symbiotic relationship. In fact, the two became so close during the days of planning that large chunks of Ney Rieber's plot for the first issue of *Captain America* #1 simply read, "John [Cassaday] knows what to do here." And with the first half of *Cap* #1, Ney Rieber actually began taking captions and dialogue off the page because as he puts it, "John knew exactly what to do. He told the story with the art."

After talking with Cassaday, Ney Rieber quickly turned out an idea of Captain America facing a terrorist not just on American soil but in the Heartland of the United States—Centerville—Any Town, U.S.A.

THE TOUGH QUESTIONS

Ney Rieber, like every other writer to work with Captain America over the last six decades, wanted to say something about the country, the people and the times Americans find themselves living in. Saying something about the United States seemed even more important after Sept. 11 for the writer—in fact, if he wasn't going to broach the topic of terrorism in America, he wouldn't have taken

MORAL GROUND Both Cassaday and Ney Rieber ditched their original plans to launch Cap in favor of a more relevant anti-terrorism tale.

Reality Bites

By tackling hot topics ripped from today's headlines, 'Captain America' continues to be comics' most controversial comic

Controversy followed Captain America in his first storyline under Marvel Knights, and there's no signs of it letting up.

Gone are Cap rogues such as the Red Skull, Flag Smasher and Serpent Society, in favor of problems, villains and issues from reality.

In the first *Cap* arc, "Enemy," writer John Ney Rieber and artist Jesse Cassaday introduced Sayed al-Tariq, a Muslim terrorist who attacks an American suit. According to Ney Rieber, al-Tariq won't be the last new villain to show up and parallel current social, political and world events.

After *Captain America* #5 wraps up the "Enemy" storyline, the writer calls the following two-issue arc "Warlords," also drawn by Cassaday. It acts as a companion piece to "Enemy" that focuses on the people behind the terrorist cells actively involved in plotting against the U.S.

"Warlords' asks: Okay, we can't even catch a glimpse of the individuals who're creating these terrorists—manipulating them—turning them into weapons aimed at the heart of this nation and its people," Ney Rieber says. "They live in shadows—they are shadows. But the hate—we can see that. Where does it come from and how can we, as a people, defeat it?"

After that, issue #7 kicks off "The Extremist" arc with British import artist Trevor Hairsine (Comics *Classified*). While Ney Rieber wants to keep most of the arc's secrets classified, he reveals it focuses on what turns an idealist into a monster. And what happens when we stop looking at the world in black and white, and see much more gray.

"There are some nasty villains in this arc," reveals Ney Rieber. "Villains who'd eat the Red Skull for lunch and wash him down with a shot of M.I.L.F.O.K."

The arc begins with Cap's quest for a missing friend named James Wall, a man who's been Cap's ally, friend and teacher. A man who's been targeted for death because he's tried to give Cap back some missing pieces of his past—to give him truth.

All of the stories up until the fourth arc, planned to begin around issue #12, lead to the idea that there are things about Captain America's past that even he doesn't know and that possibly the government never intended for him to know.

"I reckon that we will be kicking up some intense controversy," says Ney Rieber of the "Ice" storyarc, which will be penciled by Jae Lee (*The Sentry*). "A lot of the story is flashbacks. You'll see Cap with Namor, the Avengers and his classic foes. We're looking for spaces in Cap's classic continuity—and filling them in ways that shed new light and cast new shadows on the things we've always believed about Cap's roots—his origin. But in a few places, we are reshaping what's gone before." MC

DO OR DIE Many fans were angry that Cap took a soldier's path by killing al-Tariq.

the assignment.

"I believe that [former *Cap* writer] Mark Waid was talking to an editor once," says Ney Rieber. "And he said, 'Cap has to be about America.' And the editor responded: 'Why? Spider-Man's not about spiders.' I don't know how you could write Captain America if you weren't interested in writing about America."

Ney Rieber and Cassaday wanted to do more than just have Cap deal with the current fear of terrorism and a growing war in the Middle East—Cap had to deal with difficult questions. How do Americans separate the Muslim religion and the Muslim extremists responsible for the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon?

"I feel very strongly that *Cap* should be about the tough questions," says Ney Rieber. "But at the same time, I feel as though it would be irresponsible—and disrespectful to the character—to simply use him as a mouthpiece to for my own opinions. And if you really want people to consider a question, you have to ask the question in the right way. That's tough. And sometimes there just aren't any easy answers to the questions that we're faced with as a people, as a nation. That's tougher."

A SOLDIER'S STORY

The tough questions in *Captain America*'s relaunch didn't leave every reader happy—in fact, it left a lot of readers downright angry. In "Enemy," a Middle Eastern terrorist group led by Faysal al-Tariq takes a small Midwest town hostage in its own church, demanding only that Captain America be handed to them. Cap's response—by snapping al-Tariq's neck and revealing to the world his alter-ego on live TV in issue #3—made some *Cap* readers cry foul, denouncing how the new Captain America was nothing like the old. And that's just what Ney Rieber, Cassaday and even Marvel wanted to do—push the envelope of where comics end and reality begin.

"If it weren't controversial," says Ney Rieber, "if it were only fulfilling people's expectations or making them comfortable—I'd feel as though I'd let Cap down. I'd be ashamed."

While issues #1-#3 rocketed up the sales chart and made *Captain America* a top 25 seller again for the first time in two years, some fans railed against the new Cap and his new direction. But it wasn't that Cap fans felt the iconic character had strayed too far from his original roots—it was that the Marvel Knights stories were based too much in Cap's roots...his roots as a World War II soldier.

"Some of the mail we received were from people who weren't pleased with the fact that this Captain America is a soldier—making a soldier's choices," says Ney Rieber. "Some people were angry because Cap wasn't a 'Boy Scout' anymore. Some people were angry because they didn't get out of issue #3 what I'd tried to put into it—that the real battle wasn't the fight between Cap and al-Tariq, it was the questioning, the moral struggle that Cap put himself through as he crossed the battleground—before he killed. Cap is not the Punisher. That shield he carries around—that is Cap. Cap's a protector."

ONE YEAR LATER

A lot's changed since Sept. 11, 2001.

Over the last year, the U.S. has gone to war in the Middle East, increased homeland security and New York City's just beginning a plan to renovate Ground Zero.

Neither Ney Rieber nor Cassaday say they know exactly how they'll spend the one-year anniversary of the worst attack on American soil in its 226-year history. Whether the day will be spent in quiet solace, with friends and family or at memorial events is still undecided. But both say they feel the weight of 9/11 every time they put words in Captain America's mouth or make him move on the comic page.

"Sept. 11 didn't change the way I see Cap, but it definitely changed the way I felt about the responsibility involved," says Ney Rieber, just after the Fourth of July weekend. "Characters and stories, they weigh something—and Cap's heavy. That may sound strange but I can't explain the feeling any more simply. Before Sept. 11, Cap weighed a lot. After Sept. 11? I can't even say. It's off the scale. But we're talking about tons. How much does America weigh? You tell me."

In an informal office poll, the Wizard *Staff voted that the recent* Captain America *(vol. 3) #1 by Ney Rieber and Cassaday was one of the most powerful Cap stories ever told*

ONCE UPON

MOVE OVER DISNEY, DC/VERTIGO'S NEW SERIES 'FABLES' SHOWS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN FAIRY TALES GROW UP

Bill Willingham has a big problem with Disney.

"It's kind of a love/hate relationship," explains Willingham, the creator behind the DC/Vertigo's hit series *Fables*. "'The Jungle Book' is a wonderful animated movie, but after reading the book, there was so much more there. The worst has to be 'The Hunchback of Notre Dame,' where it gave a happy ending to a story where everything ends in despair."

The writer replied to "Disney-fication" with *Fables*. Launched in May, the series stars classic storybook characters like Snow White and the Big Bad Wolf—from tales by the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen—who are violently ousted from their homelands by the mysterious Adversary and thrust into modern-day Manhattan among the "mundanes" (i.e., humans).

However, when Snow White's twin sister winds up missing and presumed dead, it's up to storybook lore's notorious villain—Bigby Wolf (a.k.a. the Big Bad Wolf)—to solve the mystery. With a list of unusual suspects ranging from a no-B.S. Ms. White to the bloodthirsty Bluebeard, it's clear there won't be a happy ending. And it's that list of unusual suspects which makes *Fables* a must read.

Willingham not only embraces each character's past—no matter how sordid—but also spins them in ways that would make Disney execs blush. He also sneaks in cameos like Beauty and the Beast (who need marriage counseling), Cinderella (who carries a "married into money" stigma) and King Cole (Fabletown's mayor, and a jolly old boob), which make each issue a blast.

Read on and explore *Fables*' new era of fairy tales, where "Once upon a time" is now.

Main Bigby illustration by Lan Medina, with Brian Haberlin; all cartoon illustrations by Mark Buckingham

A TIME... BY CASEY SEIJAS

THE BIG BAD WOLF

In the world of *Fables*, everyone gets a second chance—even if you're a house-destroying, grandma-eating monster.

"I've always thought the Big Bad Wolf was such a cool character," reminisces Willingham. "So when I was coming up with the cast of *Fables*, I thought, 'I could make him the villain in the story and maybe get one good story out of him, or I could make him the central character,' and that was it. My motivation was how can I keep him in as many stories as possible."

What Willingham did to keep one of his favorite characters in the story was give him a much-needed shave, change his name to Bigby Wolf and make him the head of security for the Woodland Hills Luxury Apartment (where all the Fables reside in NYC). In fact, it was that post that led him to become the lead investigator in the possible murder/disappearance of Rose Red, Snow White's sister. However, as readers discovered in issue #3, there's much more than meets the eye of Fabletown's gruff, chain-smoking first line of defense—Bigby also has the ability to transform back into the Big Bad Wolf if need be.

THIS WOULD BE EASIER, LORD BEAST, IF I COULD UNDERSTAND YOU BETTER.
HE SAID THAT HIS CURSE REASSERTS ITSELF TO THE EXTENT THAT I BECOME MAD AT HIM.
SNOW W
DIRECTOR OF OP

SNOW WHITE

In Willingham's mind, Snow White's been an "E! True Hollywood Story" in the making for decades now.

"She was betrayed at an early age and sent off into the forest, then betrayed again when the assassins were sent out to kill her. And if she really was cohabiting with seven dwarves, in medieval society, that's pretty scandalous," relates Willingham.

Since her exile from the homeland, Snow White has set up shop as the Director of Operations of the Woodland Luxury Apartments and Deputy to Mayor-for-Life King Cole. Long gone are the days of singing to little bluebirds by a wishing well. In *Fables*, Snow White is a stern, take-no-B.S. modern woman who doesn't trust anyone as far as she can throw 'em, and it shows in the sexual tension between her and Bigby. Their relationship grows even more complicated when she becomes a prime suspect in her sister's murder case, since her and Red Rose had been long estranged ever since Rose bedded her husband, Prince Charming.

ROSE RED

Snow White describes her sister as "the last of the dedicated party fiends," but that's definitely putting it lightly.

After a decades long bitter relationship with her twin sister, Rose Red finally got the ultimate revenge on Snow White in *Fables* #1—Rose was targeted for murder, and thanks to their tumultuous relationship, Snow White became one of the primary suspects.

"If Rose Red has any cause at all, it's to make her sister's life miserable," explains Willingham. "When they were kids they were the best of friends, everything shared equally, then Snow White goes on to this wonderful fairy tale life, gets the handsome prince and she gets all the movies made about her. As far as Rose Red is concerned, her sister betrayed her trust. That 'You and me against the world together forever' pact."

NOTHING MORE TO EAT OR DRINK, MISS, BUT WE'VE SHARED SUCH A NICE FLIRTATION THIS AFTERNOON THAT I'M TEMPTED TO ASK YOU FOR YOUR PHONE NUMBER.

PRINCE CHARMING

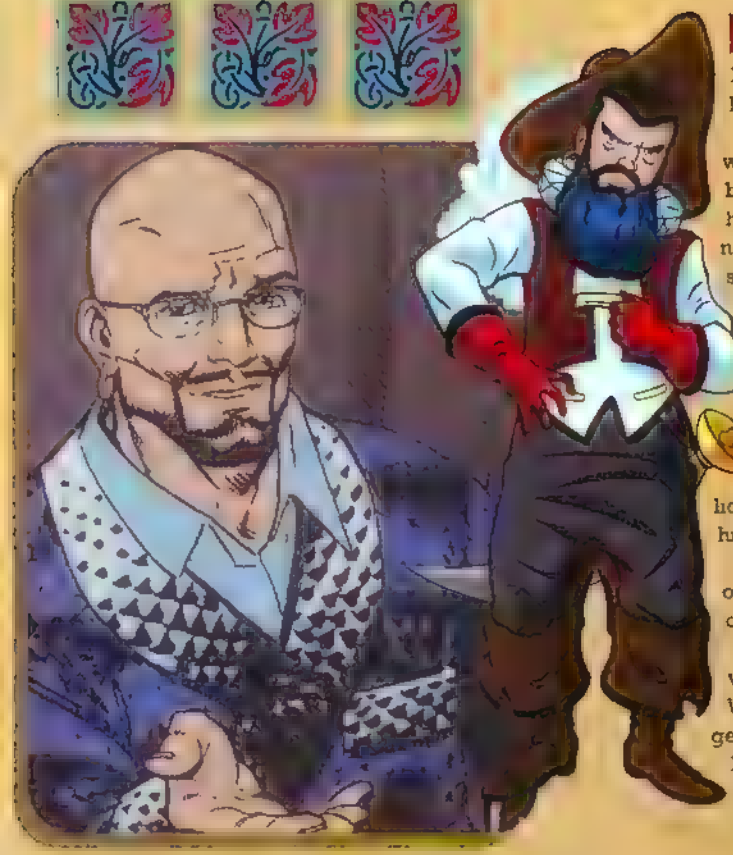
When it came time to develop Fabletown's resident hunka-hunka burnin'-love and ex-husband to Snow White, Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty, Willingham has a big confession to make.

"I have to confess, I'm a fan of 'chick flicks,' the kinds of movies that guys have to pretend they hate but their girlfriends drag them to," admits Willingham. "The thing I've noticed more and more is there are no smooth-talking rogues anymore in these romantic movies. So I decided to make my Prince Charming the guy that charms his way [through life]. He's a million miles of lovely road, but he's completely hollow."

Talk about a playa! In the first two issues, Prince Charming—who's also a prime suspect in Rose's case because of their past romantic liaison—pulls off the impossible. He seduces a waitress, gets her to pay the bill, seals the deal throughout the night, then the next morning, he gets her to do his laundry and she even gives him all the cash in her purse.

Guys, take notes.

BLUEBEARD



He's Fabletown's swashbuckling, mulhonaire lady-killer—literally.

The legend of Bluebeard is as follows: He was a wealthy French nobleman who sported a beard so black it appeared blue. Bluebeard has a peculiar habit of marrying women, then killing them on the night of the wedding and storing the corpses in a secret room in his castle.

Despite the general amnesty that was granted to all of Fabletown's residents, because of his shady past, Bluebeard became one of the chief suspects in the Rose Red murder, simply because he was engaged to her. However, that accusation was soon put on the back burner when Bluebeard offered up a one mulhon-dollar reward for the discovery and capture of his fiancée's murderer.

Yet despite his past, Willingham thinks that everyone in *Fables*, from Bluebeard to the Big Bad Wolf, deserve a second chance.

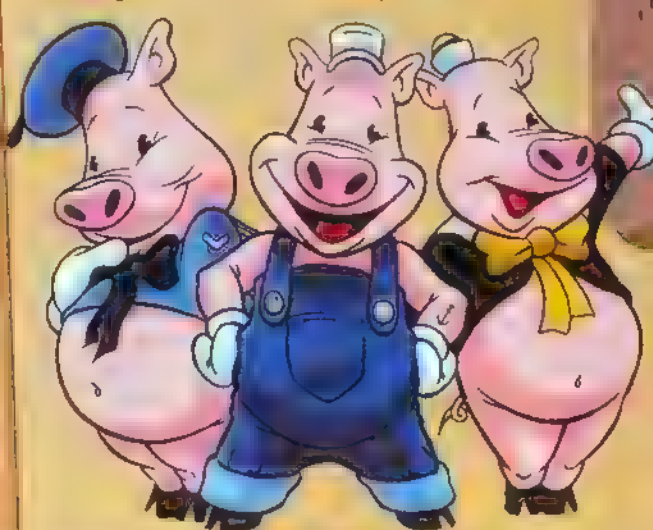
"One of the premises is, once people get to this world, they have this general amnesty," explains Willingham. "We needed some real scoundrels that get their entire past wiped out. Maybe with some, like Bigby, it'll work out, then some of them, like Bluebeard, maybe you can't change his spots."

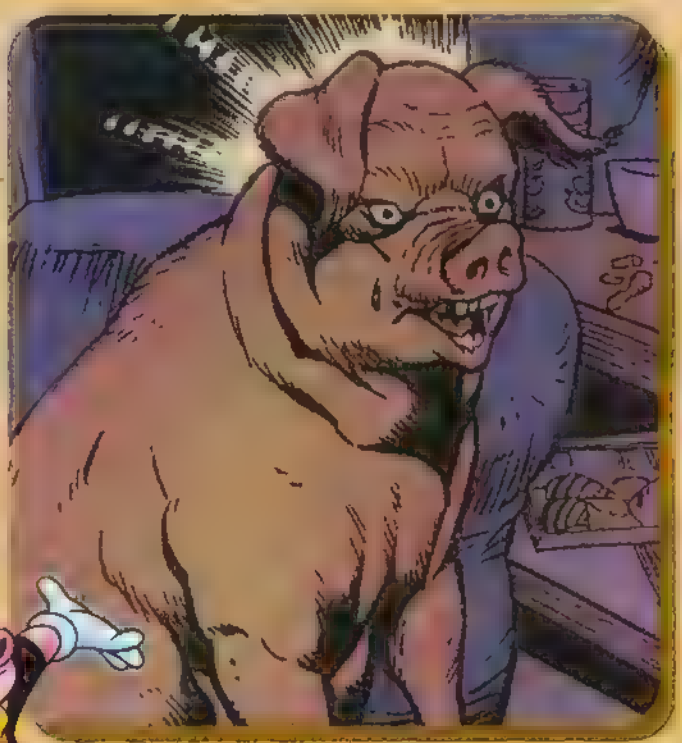
THE THREE PIGS

Long gone are the days of cute little pigs, skipping along and building adorable little cottages out of straw, sticks and bricks. These pigs are just plain slobs.

So far, readers have met only one of the three pigs, who left his home at an upstate farm (where all the non-human Fables currently reside) to get a taste of the big city and crash at Bigby's small studio apartment (the smallest apartment in the Woodland). He was messy and rude, and according to Willingham, the nicest one of the bunch. However that's not the only interesting aspect of the Three Pigs in *Fables*.

"Their story is so well known that there always has to be three pigs," hints Willingham. "If one is killed off, the next thing that happens is a long lost cousin shows up and then there's three again."



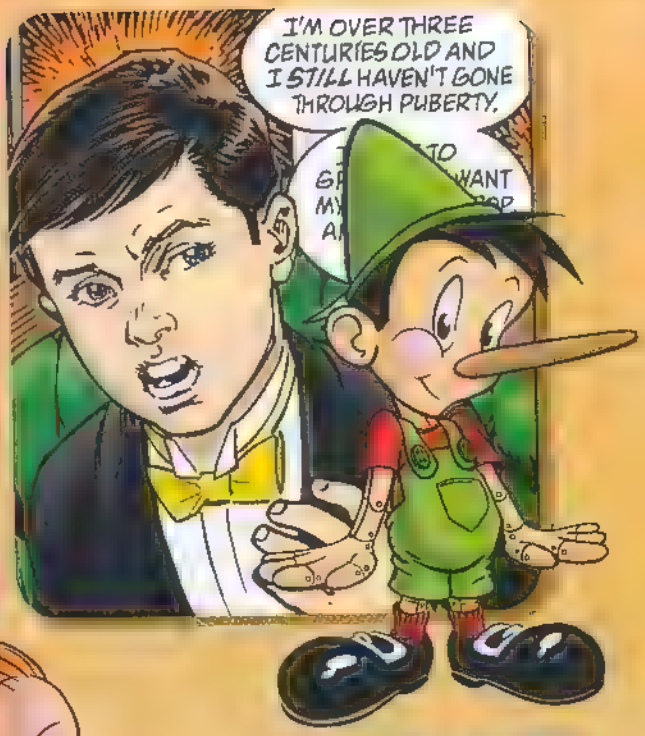


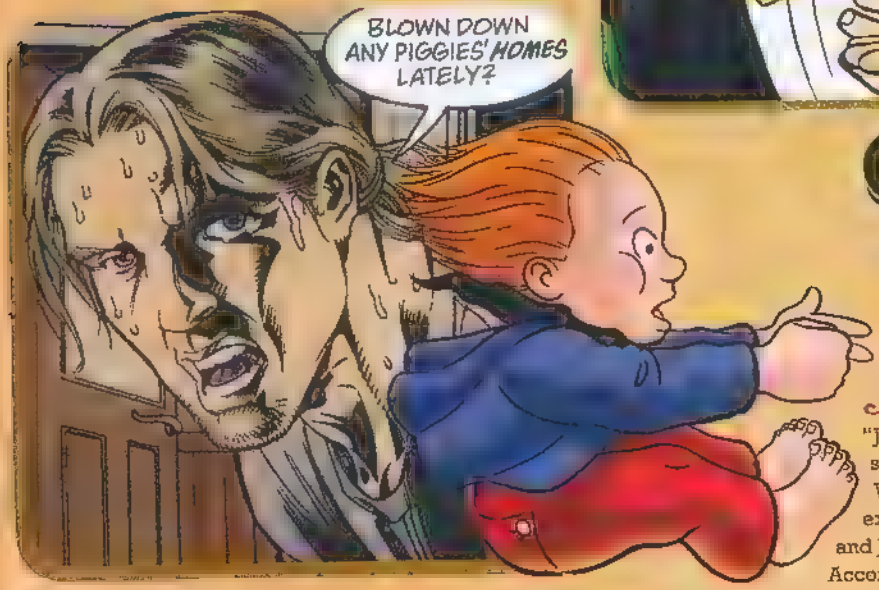
PINOCCHIO

If Pinocchio teaches us anything, it's that you should always be careful what you wish for.

After making that famous wish upon a star to become a real boy, Pinocchio soon realized he should have been a little more specific in his demands. Living the life as a centuries-old Fable trapped in an 8-year-old body has left the former puppet angry and sexually frustrated.

"He's just a bitter little kid," describes Willingham. "He's like a former child actor who never grew up."





JACK

"Jack and Prince Charming are two sides of the same coin," observes Willingham. "They're both scoundrels, except Prince Charming is good at it, and Jack just thinks he's good at it."

According to Willingham, Jack is an amalgam of several fairy tale Jacks, including the guy from "Jack and the Beanstalk," the Jack who "jumped over the candlestick," Jack Sprat, and even Jack Frost. He had an on-again, off-again relationship with Rose Red and is currently the No. 1 suspect in the murder mystery. It certainly doesn't help that he's had more than his share of run-ins with the law either.

"He's the perennial bad boy," says Willingham.

FUTURE FABLES

Fables is one fairy tale that won't be ending anytime soon.

August's issue #4 and September's issue #6 will ultimately reveal who murdered Rose Red, and the culprit just so happens to be someone you'd least expect. There's been lots of speculation on the *Fables* message board, which you can access at www.clockworkstorybook.com.

Starting in October's issue #6, a new storyarc titled "Animal Farm" kicks off. In that tale, the non-human Fables (expect to see Brer Rabbit, the Cheshire Cat and Goldilocks and the Three Bears, just to name a few) that currently reside at a secret upstate New York farm decide it's time to leave and join their fellow Fables in the big city—by any means necessary.

"There's a revolution at the farm led by the Three Pigs; it just seems natural to put them in the thick of things," offers Willingham. "There will be a division between the non-human Fables. Some of them are part of the revolutionaries and some of them are loyal to the old regime. Almost immediately, our beloved characters enter a situation where it's a case of: You better choose what side you're on right now."

Let's just hope the Fables can somehow find a way to all live happily ever after.

EAST
US

WEST

AMERICA'S GREATEST SUPERHEROES SLUG IT OUT WITH JAPAN'S RISING STARS FOR COMIC BOOK SUPREMACY, ILLUSTRATED BY COMICS' HOTTEST ARTISTS

BY THE WIZARD STAFF

Bring it, fanboys!

Readers have hammered the *Wizard* offices with mail asking when we're gonna feature "Last Man Standing"-style throwdowns between your favorite manga stars and American comic icons. And what began with the idea of pitting Superman against *Dragonball Z*'s Goku, spread like wildfire by adding Wolverine, *Trigun*'s Vash the Stampede, Spider-Man, *Akira*'s Tetsuo and many more of what truly are the world's greatest characters to the mix. Prepare yourself for the craziest East/West showdown since Bobby Flay crossed swords with Iron Chef Japanese Morimoto on "Iron Chef"!

Wizard assembled a quintet of one-on-ones rendered by the finest artists in the world, including Pat Lee (*Transformers G1*), Phil Jimenez (*New X-Men*, *Wonder Woman*), J.G. Jones (*Wonder Woman: The Hiketeia*), Udon Studios (*Deadpool*) and Ethan Van Sciver (*New X-Men*) These titanic tussles will definitely leave you feeling bloody, battered and beaten.

So sit back, kick your feet up and keep the drool off your chin when you see these bad-ass battles. And perhaps dream of what might one day become reality. Just remember: It was a "what if" feature like this that transformed an Alex Ross pinup into Top Cow's *Battle of the Planets* series. Maybe these fights won't be so far-fetched, after all...

OPENING ILLUSTRATION BY KAARE ANDREWS

SUPERMAN VS. GOKU

BY LONG YU AND UDON STUDIOS

ORIGINS Rocketed from the doomed planet Krypton as an infant, Superman crashed on Earth, where his alien physiology gifted him with superpowers and abilities far beyond those of mortal men!

Goku was sent to Earth by an alien race set on conquering the planet. Suffering from amnesia, Goku instead became Earth's defender, and found the seven mystical Dragonballs by wielding his super-strength, super-speed and teleportation

THE BATTLE The wizard Babidi manipulates Goku into thinking an eighth Dragonball exists on a parallel Earth protected by an invincible Kryptonian. The Super Saiyan crosses over dimensions and finds the Man of Steel inspecting a LexCorp satellite. Goku introduces himself by throttling Superman into the nearby moon. Shaking it off, Supes dodges the next couple of lunges, but his mysterious foe's martial arts prowess and teleportation ability allows him to land more blows. The Man of Steel proves to be able to absorb more punishment than the orange-clad bruiser, and surprises Goku with a couple of blasts of heat vision. Wanting to end the struggle, Goku rapidly teleports, landing a dozen blows to Supes in the span of a second. Not falling for the same trick, Superman's super-vision detects a particle flux when Goku teleports, allowing him to anticipate where his foe will appear. As the Z Warrior winks out and reappears, Superman unleashes a haymaker, pounding Goku deep into the moon's surface. The Man of Steel demands an explanation of this assault, but Goku amps up to Super-Saiyan mode and fires off a *kamehameha* blast that fries Supes like a fish stick! Pressing his attack, a furious Goku unleashes a planet-destroying punch that hits a stunned Superman square in the "S" shield, knocking him clear off the moon and back towards Earth. Realizing the fall might kill the Kryptonian, Goku teleports and catches Superman before he goes splat. It is then that Goku senses there are no such Dragonballs on this Earth. Apologizing for his dishonor, Goku humbly begs for forgiveness before heading back to his own dimension to take out the lying Babidi. Puzzled at what had just happened, a woozy Superman collapses unconscious, awaiting medical treatment.

SPIDER-MAN VS. VASH THE STAMPEDE

BY J.G. JONES, COLOR BY DAN KEMP & AVALON STUDIOS

ORIGINS Bitten by a radioactive spider, Peter Parker gained all the abilities of an arachnid, including superagility, super strength and an uncanny "spider sense" that warns him of imminent danger as the amazing Spider-Man!

Vash the Stampede wanders his desert planet with a gun to help those in need. His origin shrouded in mystery, only his powers are known: super-marksmanship, mind precognition, telepathy and a probability power that stacks things in his favor.

THE BATTLE Swinging the Manhattan skyline, Spider-Man notices a shadowy figure behind Josey's Bar & Grill carrying a massive handgun. "Well, hi dee ho, Punisher!" Spidey barks, but the figure who looks up ain't Frank Castle. It's Vash the Stampede, banished to Earth by the nefarious scientist Dr. Nebraska. Vash keeps walking when Spidey ensnares him in his web-bing. Swooping down to pick up the mystery man, his spider sense buzzes in time for him to avoid the barrage of bullets tearing his webbed prison from inside. The fight moves downtown, as Spidey tries to snatch Vash's gun away. However, a flock of pigeons get in the way. The Human Typhoon merely turns and fires one of Spidey's web shooters clear off his wrists! "Buzz off, bug-man," quips Vash, jumping onto the Liberty Ferry. "Can't a guy just find a decent tavern around here?" Irked that his foe just cost him a week's pay in web-shooter repairs, Spidey dodges his foe until they reach Liberty Island, where he gums up the Stampede's gun while climbing up the statue. Vash smiles and transforms his left arm into yet another gun, forcing Spidey to bounce farther up. Frustrated to end this skirmish, the wall-crawler somersaults over Vash and bonks him on the back of his head, with an unsteady Vash plummeting into the Hudson River! Aghast at what he'd done, Spidey jumps in after him, but finds no body. Coming up for air, Spidey hears one more gunshot — from Vash, escaping on a tugboat. The shot drops a nearby life preserver on the web-slinger, who muses, "Spider-Man 0, Punisher Lite 1."

G-FORCE VS. THE BAT-FAMILY

BY PHIL JIMENEZ AND LARRY STUCKER; COLOR BY UDON STUDIOS

ORIGINS Super-spy teen group G-Force uses a combination of ancient fighting techniques and super-technological weapons to combat the evil alien forces from the planet Spectra!

Comprised of the vigilantes Batman, Nightwing, Robin, Batgirl and Huntress, the Bat-Family bands together to protect Gotham City against any and all threats that arise.

THE BATTLE Nightwing hasn't checked in for hours. Calls for Robin have gone unanswered. The Huntress... MIA all night. Suspecting the worst, Batman makes a quick call for backup, then disappears into the night. Batman scours the city discovering the source of the disappearance: a group of four unknown soldiers, possibly metahumans, who have captured Robin, Nightwing and Huntress. Drawing nearer, Batman overhears his teammates accused of being agents of something named "Spectra." "Spectra?" the Dark Knight thinks, but before he can give the word any thought, he twirls, avoiding an attack from behind by the fifth member of this mysterious group. Landing amidst his teammates' captors, Batman further takes in his surroundings as his adversaries size him up. "Nice job, Jason," the apparent leader says as the darker-cloaked one—the one who almost got the drop on Batman—descends from the ceiling. "Spill it, Spectra!" Jason sneers. 'Or maybe you think Zoltar is going to magically appear and get you out of here?" "No," the Dark Knight calmly replies, "...she is." And with that, Batgirl drops from the shadows, landing on the largest one, incapacitating him with a nerve pinch. A smoke bomb dropped by Batman adds to the confusion, and masks their twin assault dropping the woman and the youngster of the group. As Batgirl makes short work of the impetuous Jason, Batman trades blows with the white clad leader before he too, succumbs. "So what do you know of this 'Zoltar?" Batman asks as he untenes his teammates. "Never heard of 'im," sputters Nightwing. "I'm just glad I don't have to listen to that little one talk anymore."

WOLVERINE VS. MANJI

BY ETHAN VAN SCIVER; COLOR BY HI-FI DESIGN

ORIGINS With enhanced senses, razor sharp claws and a rapid healing factor, the mutant known as Logan underwent a process in the Canadian government's Weapon X program that bonded an unbreakable adamantium alloy to his entire skeleton, making him a nearly unstoppable killing machine.

After killing his corrupt master, Manji went on the run to avoid execution. He encounters an old woman who curses him with immortality and a healing ability that can cure any injury. To release himself from the curse, Manji must kill 1,000 evil men.

THE BATTLE In the early 21st century, Manji wanders Japan to fulfill his mission. When he stumbles across the same temple as a meditating Wolverine, Manji senses the man is a killer and attempts to add one more notch to his sword. Wolverine's on the alert instantly, having smelled the stink of death on Manji's scent. The two warriors make several bloody passes at one another in the samurai way, slashing and hacking with their sword and claws, respectively. For every blow Manji lands, Wolverine scores one hit of his own, but because of their two healing factors, neither gains the upper hand. On one pass, Manji thrusts his sword deeply through Logan's torso, but the blade becomes stuck in his adamantium ribcage, pinning the weapon there. Enraged beyond belief, Wolverine enters a complete berserker mode, hacking and slashing at Manji like a human Cuisinart. As blood splatters like a Jackson Pollock painting, Manji finds himself in near-unbearable agony. Realizing he cannot defeat Wolverine, Manji leaves himself wide open to Logan's attack, absorbing more punishment than a trailer park in a tornado. With one final lunging attack, Wolverine takes Manji's head clear off at the neck, decapitating the samurai. Stalking off to savor his win and lick his wounds, Wolverine leaves satisfied, never knowing that Manji will regenerate from this attack in a couple of years.

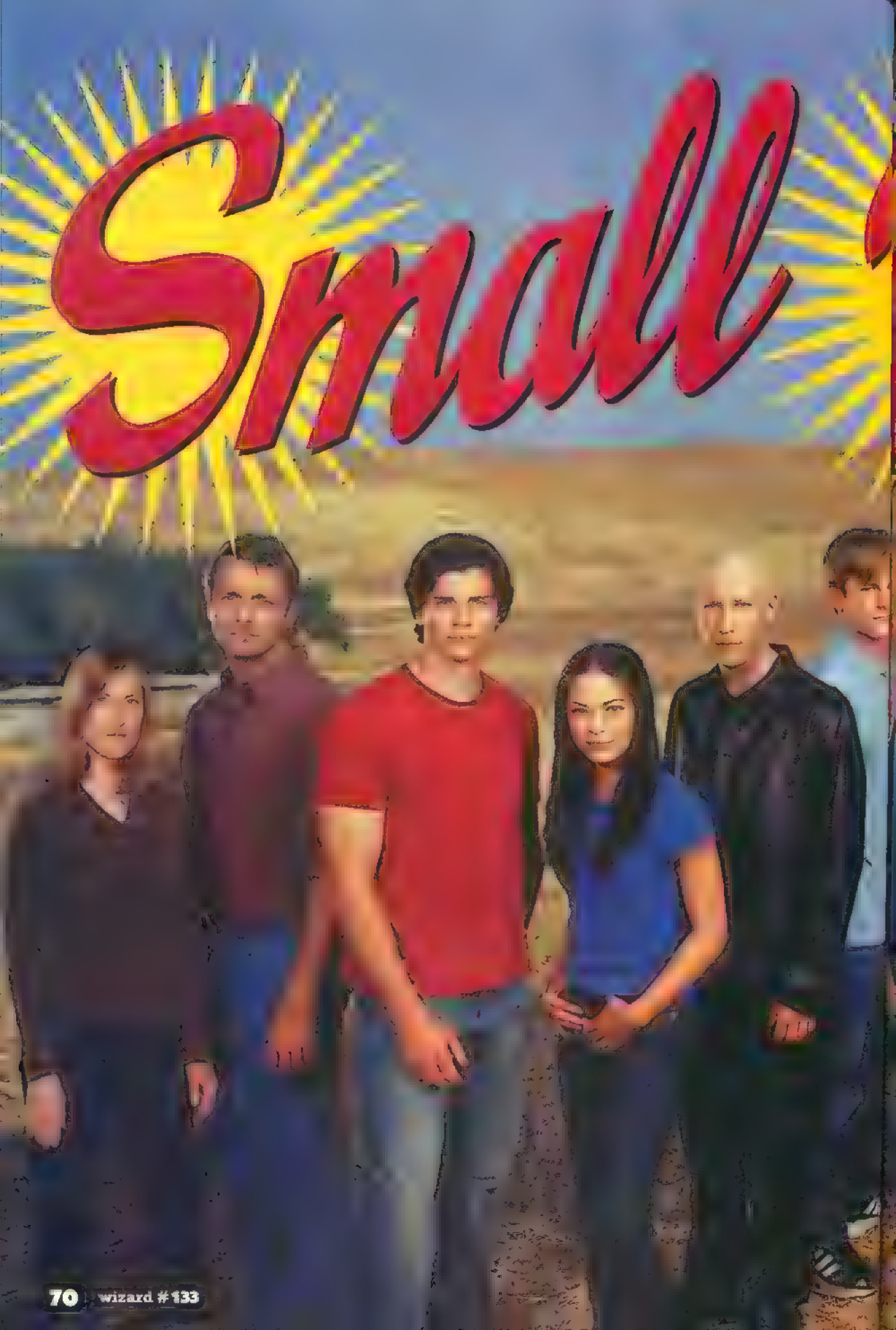
TETSUO VS. PHOENIX

BY PAT LEE; COLOR BY DREAMWAVE PRODUCTIONS

ORIGINS In a post WWIII future, teenager Tetsuo got into a motocycle accident that unleashed his latent, nigh-omnipotent psychokinetic powers. The power combined with drugs, drove him mad, and he tried to destroy the world.

Born a mutant, Jean Grey can control objects with her telekinesis and is considered one of the world's most powerful telepaths. As she's matured, her powers have grown to even greater levels, manifesting what's called the Phoenix Force, a cosmic consciousness giving her the power of a god.

THE BATTLE Using his vast powers, Tetsuo travels to another dimension, winding up smack dab in the middle of modern New York City in the Marvel Universe! Sensing raw, unimaginable power, Jean Grey races to the Big Apple to confront this phenomenon. Tetsuo senses her and unleashes a psychic whirlwind, but Jean counters with Howitzer sized mind blasts to gauge her foe. Wanting to mimic his own world's devestation, Tetsuo unleashes his psychic arsenal - everything in Manhattan becomes a weapon of destruction! Jean barely contains the collateral damage, as volcanoes emerge from the bedrock. Taking a more indirect approach, Jean attempts to soothe Tetsuo's damaged psyche and calm him into submission. But Tetsuo violently repels the attack, and awakens the Phoenix Force inside Jean! With seemingly no remorse, Jean grabs hold of Tetsuo with a fiery telekinetic action, violently shaking him like a rag doll. Slamming the young upstart to the ground, Jean enters his mind with all the subtlety of a sledgehammer, scrambling his higher functions and turning him into a virtual vegetable. Regaining her senses, she treks home to the X-Mansion. "Perhaps we can prepare a room for you, little boy," Jean says, flying off with the limp body. "A padded one."


Small

Wonders

By Mike Cotton

SMALL TALK "Smallville" creators Alfred Gough and Miles Millar say much of the show's success is due to the stellar cast (above).

'SMALLVILLE' creators Miles Millar and Alfred Gough follow up a smash-hit debut with the Teen of Steel's second season, the 'Spider-Man 2' screenplay and the chance to write Batman—any way they can

"Smallville" creators Miles Millar and Alfred Gough discovered a simple rhyme to make Superman cool again—"no flights, no tights."

"That's sort of our rule," says Gough, sitting in his partner's quiet Los Angeles home-office where the two work on upcoming scripts and projects. "That's what we offered to 'Smallville' in terms of grounding Clark Kent and not introducing him in the costume."

The broad appeal of a young superhero in training who's still discovering his powers and abilities made "Smallville" a red-hot success on The WB network. It's also what caught the eye of Sony Pictures when they offered Hollywood's hottest writing duo the scripting chores on the sequel to 2002's blockbuster comic adaptation, "Spider-Man."

Millar and Gough aren't really avid comic book readers, and while their résumé boasts previous writing gigs on 'Shanghai Noon" and "Lethal Weapon 4," they had no comic book experience before "Smallville." But as they'll tell you, you don't need to read comics to write a good story involving Superman.

"We love the first 'Superman' film and I used to watch the animated 'Spider-Man' series when I was a kid. But neither of us were ever comic book fans," explains Gough, lounging in a leather club chair, pen and pad in hand as he and Millar shoot ideas back and forth about the "Spider-Man" sequel. "In a way, it's good because we are

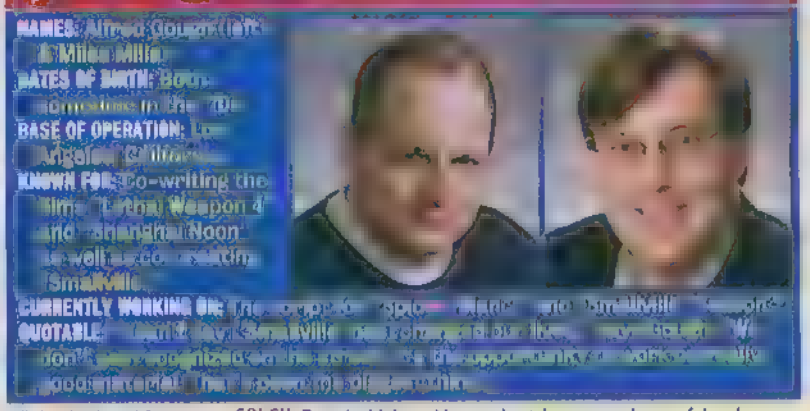
able to bring a different sort of perspective to both Superman and Spider-Man."

"We didn't come with baggage," continues Millar, sitting behind his large desk with the first draft of the "Spider-Man" sequel on his computer screen. "We're respectful to the back stories and mythology, but we're not bound by any of it."

And playing "Smallville" continuity-free has done wonders for the show and comic book acclaim in general. By satisfying both Superman loyalists and comic book novices, Millar and Gough created a resurgence in Superman popularity not seen since 1978's "Superman: The Movie."

But just because the two creators don't know much about Superman's 60-plus-year history doesn't mean the team ignores comic continuity. For the second season of "Smallville," they've hired former *Superman* scribe Jeph Loeb to add a touch of the comic book Superman to his television alter ego. And they've even kicked around the idea of having a young pre-Batman Bruce Wayne cameo on their show. Yes, that's right, they want Bruce Wayne to cameo on "Smallville."

Vital Stats



WIZARD: How realistic is it to craft a World's Finest television meeting between the Man of Steel and the Dark Knight?

GOUGH: The DC Universe is a very fractured universe because the rights are not wholly owned by [DC Comics]. So it's hard to do that kind of crossover. It involves a lot of business negotiations but it's something we're going to keep trying to push for. I don't think you'll see it this season but maybe Season Three or Season Four. It just becomes a very sticky sort of rights issue. But it's something that we'd love to do.

MILLAR: It'd be great and we'd love to do that. But it's a little out of our hands and in the hand of others.

How would you guys play the Bruce Wayne/Clark Kent relationship? Do you have ideas on that already?

GOUGH: I don't think they get along at all. The last line Clark says to Bruce is, "You should really seek some professional help." That's always been the fun of the polar opposites of Superman and Batman, and what they represent. You know one is truth, justice, and the American way and one is basically a vigilante.

And where do you see Bruce Wayne?

MILLAR: We see him as a contemporary of Lex. He went to boarding school with Lex we think. And if Clark met him...they'd be diametrically opposed in how they'd handle a situation. I think that would be fun.

What kind of person is Bruce Wayne in "Smallville" continuity?

GOUGH: He's a tortured young man. He's just come back from traveling around the world. He's not fully evolved into his Batman persona.

MILLAR: He's a wild child.

GOUGH: Exactly. He's reckless and quick tempered—all of the elements as Batman he'll focus and channel. But at this point it's still emerging.

How did you guys move from "Smallville" to getting involved with "Spider-Man 2"?

GOUGH: We got a call from Columbia Pictures and we went and had a meeting. They actually took us over to the set of the first "Spider-Man" and we met Sam Raimi, Tobey Maguire, and [Producer] Laura Ziskin. And they basically said they'd like us to consider writing the sequel because they really like "Smallville" and "Shanghai Noon." And you call us up and invite us to the set like that, nine times out of 10 our answer will be "yes."

MILLAR: We've always been huge fans of Sam Raimi. So for us, it's really like a dream come true.

GOUGH: We were told once, "You guys had done the Marvel Comics version of Superman." So to have Marvel Comics come to us and ask us to get involved in this, that was a real thrill.

How has "Spider-Man 2" changed now that the original film's screenwriter David Koepp is writing the first draft of the script?

GOUGH: David's finished his the script and turned it in and we're basically working with [director] Sam Raimi, [producer] Laura Ziskin and [Marvel Studios President] Avi Arad on the story. We'll use ideas and bits and pieces from the Koepp script. Koepp had an idea that he wanted to write—and write exclusively—Columbia asked us, "Hey, we know this is a strange situation, but would you mind doing this?" We said, "Sure." I think Columbia felt that since he wrote the first movie, he had earned a right to do this. He took a shot at a script and there's some ideas that we'll use as we formulate the story with Sam and everyone else.

How will Peter Parker evolve in the sequel?

GOUGH: We can't really talk too much about the story—because the X-Men will be sent out to kill us—but you will see Peter grow and evolve. That's really the story Sam wants to tell. You'll see him

"I don't think they get along at all. The last line Clark says to Bruce [Wayne] is, 'You should really seek some professional help.'"

—Alfred Gough, on a possible Batman cameo

grow as a person, a superhero and in all his relationships.

I know you can't say too much about your Spidey work, so what do you guys have planned for "Smallville" Season Two?

MILLAR: I think next season opens many new areas for us which we can explore, and we're particularly interested in looking at Clark's origin and his continual journey of self-discovery. I think over the course of the season, he'll really begin to understand where he comes from and what part he plays in the universe, in the grand scheme of things.

GOUGH: Clark will be getting a new superpower—something you have seen before, though not as what you'd think was a superpower. Also, one of the friends will learn the secret, and that's something I think will put a new spin on things. Oh, we'll also be introducing red kryptonite.

MILLAR: And that's just in the first few episodes!

GOUGH: We start just seconds after the tornado in the season finale and then we come out of the gate with some really strong stories. There will definitely be some interesting things happening with the spaceship.

MILLAR: In terms of Lex [Luthor], it'll obviously be a slow evolution but that, for us, is very interesting. We've actually deliberately kept the character evolving towards his evil self in this first season so I think that's going to be really interesting to see how the plot develops that way. Obviously for Lex, he's out on his own now. He's going to be having some money problems and challenges from a business point of view—that's going to be fun. For us, Lex is a great character to write and we really enjoy writing for Michael [Rosenbaum], who really steps up and delivers some fantastic drama on television.

Lex has really become the breakout character from the show. Did that surprise you guys?

GOUGH: Not really. He is definitely the most intriguing character. The hardest thing we were doing in casting that character was taking the name Lex Luthor out of the equation. In many ways, casting Clark Kent was easier than casting Lex Luthor, in terms of taking him away from that sort of totally evil supervillain. We always said we were looking for a young Michael Keaton—a comedian who had a sense of energy and charisma but also sort of a danger there as well. Once we had Michael [Rosenbaum], we knew the character would work.

Will we ever see an evil Lex Luthor on the show?

MILLAR: We know where Lex's destiny eventually ends, so I think that's something we're heading towards. For us, it's interesting to see twists and turns in his journey. His actual turn to full evilness will be a long way from now. There's definitely twists and turns. You're going to think he's turned, and he's not. For us, it's just playing with expectations with that character. Everyone knows he turns evil so I think that's why he's so intriguing. You always question his motives. Why is he doing something? And actually, all the time he's doing it because he wants to do it. It's a good thing. Because we know where he ends up, the audience questions that, and that's why he's such a fun character.

Some fans have complained about the villain-of-the-week syndrome of the show. Is that going to continue into Season Two?

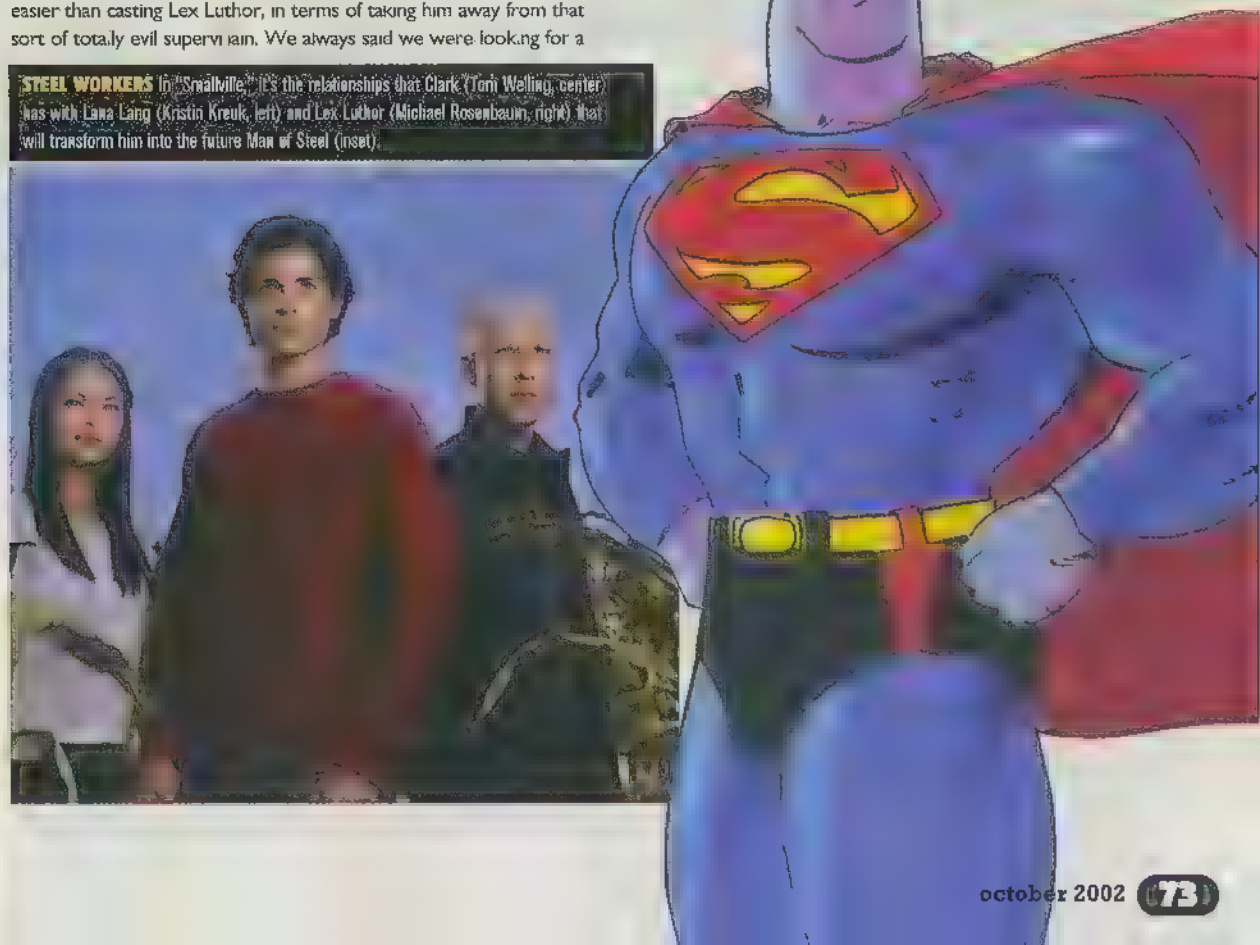
GOUGH: If you look at the course of this season, the first seven episodes, by design, are set up that way because we didn't go into it assuming anybody knew what Kryptonite was. When viewers are coming to a show, you want them to understand what the show is.

MILLAR: The average viewer of a TV show watches one in four episodes. So the aim in the first seven episodes in any series is to re-establish the premise.

GOUGH: If you look at the second half of the season, there was a big variety in storytelling. Obviously as we move into Season Two, we will always have those episodes. But you won't see as many.

MILLAR: It's a little perplexing because one of the finer elements is to actually battle someone of equal power.

GOUGH: It's the Superman element of the show.



STEEL WORKERS In "Smallville," it's the relationships that Clark (Tom Welling, center) has with Lana Lang (Kristin Kreuk, left) and Lex Luthor (Michael Rosenbaum, right) that will transform him into the future Man of Steel (inset).

Smallville Season Two

Just like last season, there's only one thing "Smallville" promises for Season Two—no Superman.

While co-creators Miles Millar and Alfred Gough are tight-lipped about their plans for Season Two of last year's hottest WB debut, rumor has it a lot will change on the show even though the "no flights, no tights" rule is still in effect.

Reportedly, early in Season Two, one of Clark Kent's closest friends will learn his secret. But whether that could be Pete Ross, Chloe, Lana Lang or even Lex Luther (Michael Rosenbaum, at left with Tom Welling) still remains a mystery. But one thing's for sure: Clark's Kryptonian origin will be one of the things Lex begins to investigate again—but only if he can find the time amid caring for his now-paralyzed father, Lionel Luthor.

According to Millar and Gough, there's a type of "role reversal" between the father and son after the older Luthor was paralyzed during last season's tornado-filled ending.

Also, look for Clark to finally become more interested in journalism as a new principal takes over Smallville High. According to sources at The WB, Principal Reynolds was a professor at Exeter Prep when Lex attended and may be a little less altruistic than he first appears.

In other "Smallville" tidbits, it looks like Whitney, Lana Lang's boyfriend, won't be returning as a regular cast member in Season Two, opening up the possibility of a love triangle between Lana, Chloe and Clark. Also, look for Martha Kent's father to show up early in the season and a possible trip to Metropolis and the *Daily Planet* by the end of Season Two. ■ MC

What about characters like Lois Lane and Perry White showing up on "Smallville." Is that possible?

GOUGH: Some of those characters will be showing up this season

Does that mean we'll see a Metropolis episode?

MILLAR: Well, that's always our aim to go to Metropolis for an episode. It's always come down to the budget. But also, it's seeing the characters from Superman that we love, like Lois Lane and Perry White, but seeing them become the characters that…

GOUGH: That we know they've become

MILLAR: Going into Season Two, fans will really enjoy where you see these beloved characters starting out. And how Clark first meets Perry White and Lois, it's going to be fun.

So, where's Lois and Perry in their lives at this point?

GOUGH: Lois is in college. She's just a few years older than Clark, Lana and Chloe. And Perry White is a struggling, young reporter in his 20s. Working for the *Daily Planet* is a distant dream for Perry at this stage of his life. But Lois is in college, and I don't think Lois and Clark get along at all.

Do you think we'll ever see Clark fly on the show?

GOUGH: Probably not. There might be the allusions to flying, certainly like the floating in the second episode, and obviously he was sucked up into a tornado at the end this season, but that is sort of the final step in the journey. Maybe in the last minute of the last episode?

***Superman: For All Seasons* writer Jeph Loeb is working on the show for you two now. What's his involvement going to be?**

GOUGH: Jeph is going to be basically a writer on our staff. And we really like *Superman for All Seasons*. In terms of the tone, I thought it was just a really smart book. And it's nice because Jeph is very familiar with the Superman Universe but he does it in a very intelligent way. The goal with the television show is you establish a vision for the show but you need to open it up to other voices as well. I think that's how shows expand and how they don't repeat themselves. And you can sort of keep expanding the world. That's obviously the goal for the writing staff: to find the different strengths.

Do you two ever think about bringing other comic book properties to film or television?

MILLAR: Spider-Man is something that we've always dreamed about doing, so the fact that we are doing that is pretty much a dream come true. The other properties though…

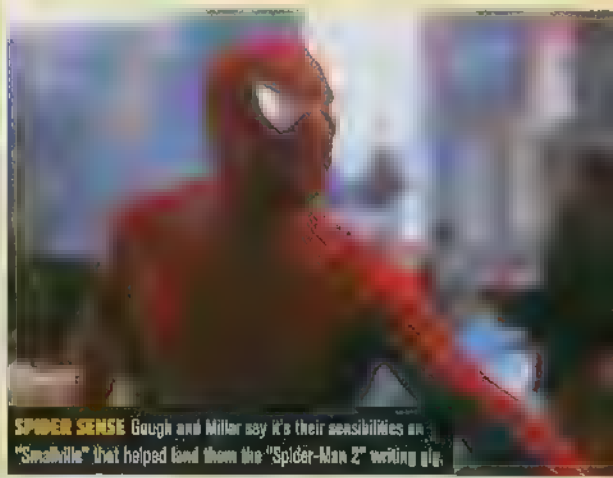
GOUGH: We have our own ideas for a cool Batman movie but it'd run about $50 million in development.

MILLAR: Batman is one we'd love to do. There's no question about that.

For your work on "Spider-Man," are you guys doing a bunch of research? Are you guys looking for graphic novels to read? What's that process like?

GOUGH: We look at the comic and history of Spider-Man. A lot of it though is really talking to Avi Arad who is just an incredible fountain of knowledge of the entire Marvel Universe. Again, you want to get some research but you don't want to get mired in it either.

MILLAR: We've read a lot of comics now and we've also read the *Ultimate Spider-Man* books. We have definitely done our homework.



SPIDER SENSE Gough and Miller say it's their sensibilities on "Smallville" that helped land them the "Spider-Man 2" writing gig.

Would you guys ever consider writing a comic book?

GOUGH: You know, DC's actually approached us about doing something like that. Do you mean an existing character or one of our own?

Either one

GOUGH: They're actually doing a *Smallville* comic and they asked us to do it, but with the show and "Spider-Man 2," we weren't able to. Actually, Mark Verheiden, who's on our staff at "Smallville," is doing it. We have a couple ideas of our own and it would be interesting to tackle them. It would *definitely* be interesting.

Much like Lex Luthor, Wizard Staff Writer Mike Cotton's descent into villainy is a long, slow, painful process for everyone he works with.

Smallville TM & The WB: Spider-Man TM & Columbia Pictures

DRAWING POWER Grizzled WWII soldier Sgt. Rock and the Silver Age Hawkman (left) are just two of the characters Kubert has invigorated.

E ROCK

Valuing hard work, humility and integrity, Joe Kubert hasn't slowed down, even after 60-plus years in the comics industry

BY JOE YANARELLA

The noise rises from the streets and bounces off apartment buildings. Cars buzz by, children race through grimy streets and housewives hold court on front stoops The Great Depression is nearly upon New York City n 1929, but Milford Street in East New York is alive with activity

While other children play ball and tag, a 3-year-old boy hunches n the gutter. The images in his head spill out on the sidewalk, etched with chalk he purchased with gift pennies.

His hands grow weary as he crafts image after image—guns, cowboys, even superheroes.

Seventy-three years have passed since that boy first gripped the chalk.

But for comic artist extraordinaire Joe Kubert, that feeling of drifting into a zone where neither time nor the surrounding environment matter has always been the place he was meant to be

"Drawing is such a tremendously uplifting feeling," admits Kubert as he relaxes in his spacious office/drawing studio at the Dover, N.J., art schoo he founded. "I've never experienced dope or anything like that, but from what I've heard and from what I've read, that's the closest thing I've experienced. It's not an exhilaration, just a really, really good feeling. When I'm drawing, it's not even a physical effort."

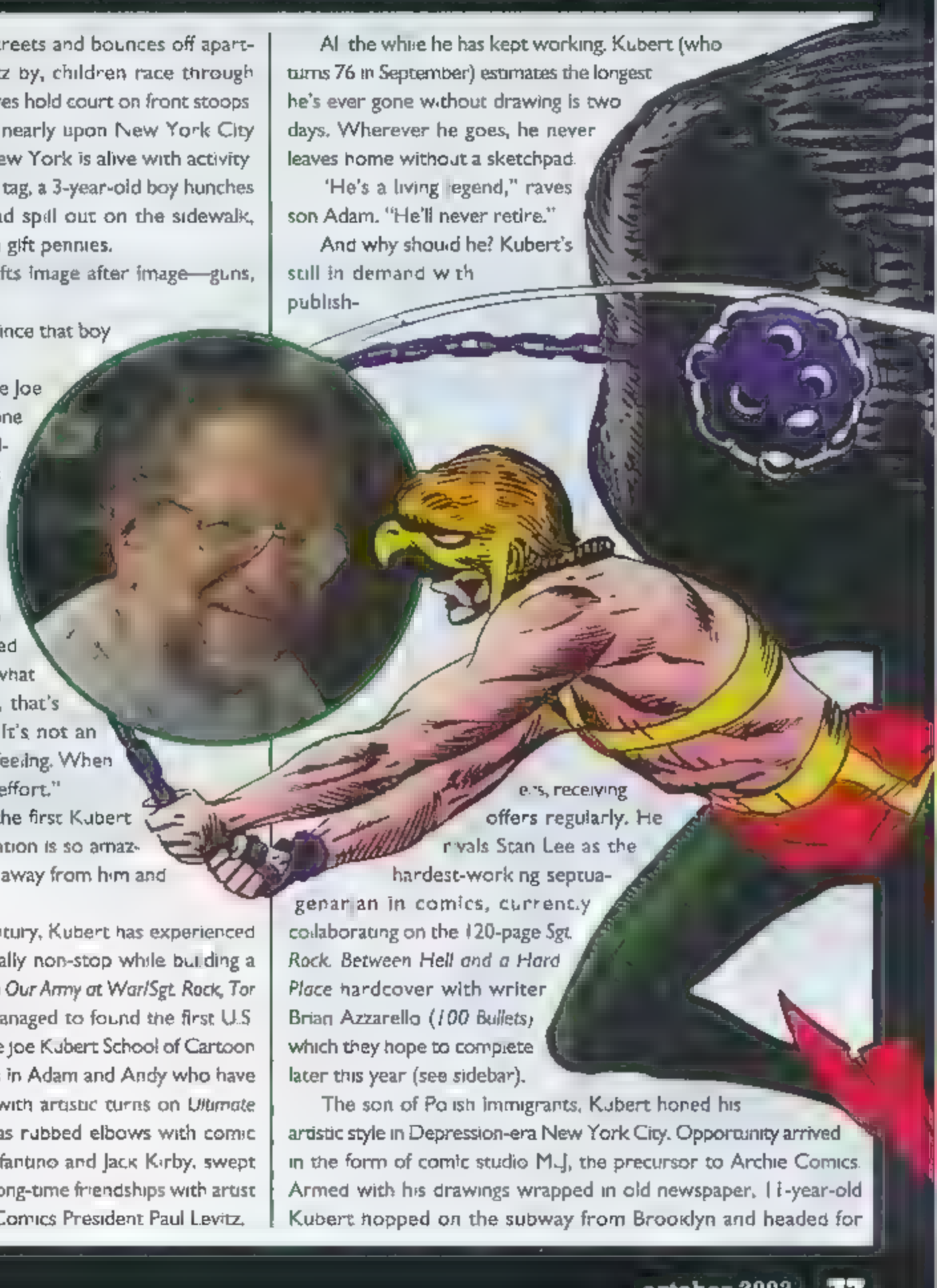
Adds Rick Veitch, a graduate of the first Kubert School class in 1976: "Joe's concentration is so amazing that a bomb could go off two feet away from him and he would keep drawing."

For nearly three-quarters of a century, Kubert has experienced his own personal high, drawing virtually non-stop while building a legacy that includes legendary stints on *Our Army at War*/*Sgt. Rock*, *Tor* and *The Brave and the Bold*. He has managed to found the first U.S accredited comic book art school—The Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art—and raise two sons in Adam and Andy who have shot to the top of the comic world with artistic turns on *Ultimate X-Men* and *Origin*, respectively He has rubbed elbows with comic book legends Alex Toth, Carmine Infantino and Jack Kirby, swept floors for Will Eisner and maintained long-time friendships with artist extraordinaire Neal Adams and DC Comics President Paul Levitz.

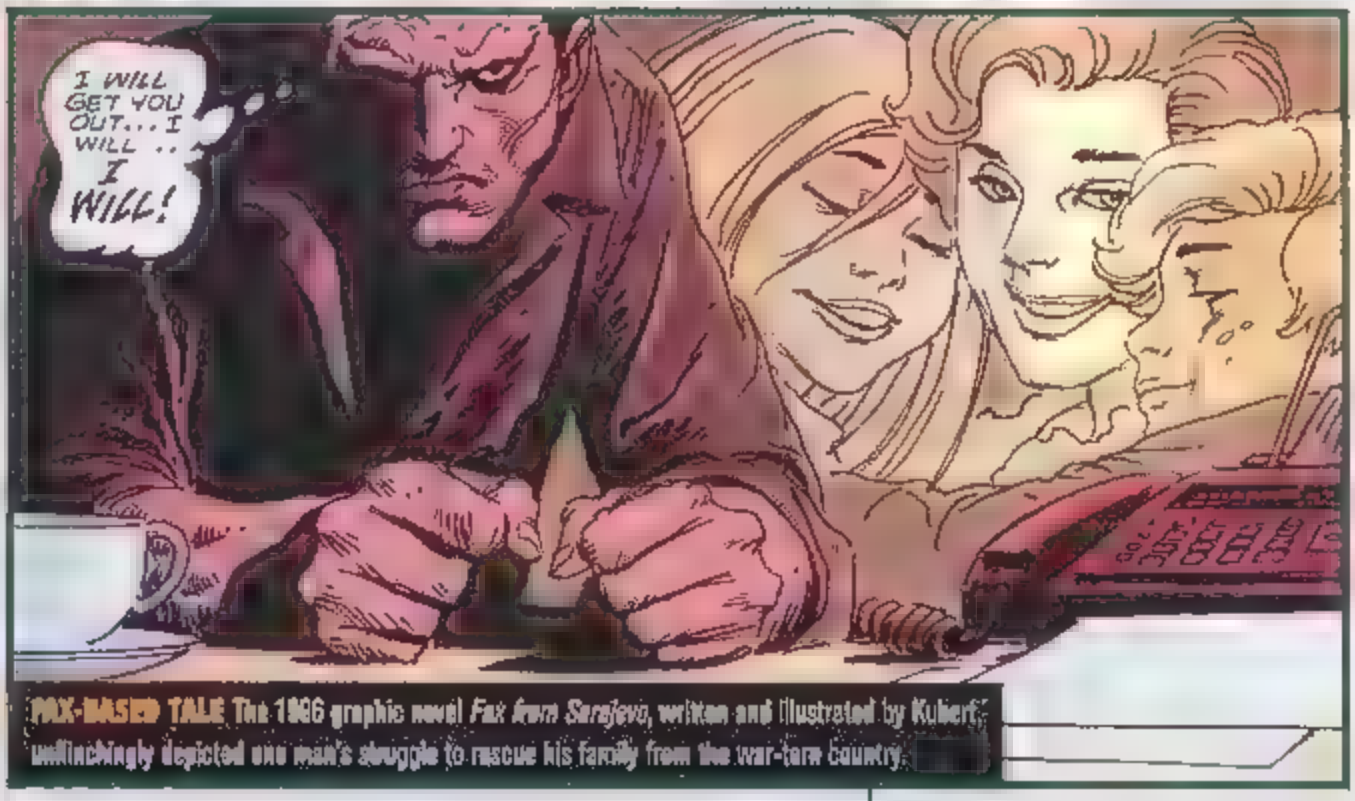
All the while he has kept working. Kubert (who turns 76 in September) estimates the longest he's ever gone without drawing is two days. Wherever he goes, he never leaves home without a sketchpad.

"He's a living legend," raves son Adam. "He'll never retire."

And why should he? Kubert's still in demand with publishers, receiving offers regularly. He rivals Stan Lee as the hardest-working septuagenarian in comics, currently collaborating on the 120-page *Sgt. Rock: Between Hell and a Hard Place* hardcover with writer Brian Azzarello (*100 Bullets*) which they hope to complete later this year (see sidebar).



The son of Polish immigrants, Kubert honed his artistic style in Depression-era New York City. Opportunity arrived in the form of comic studio M.J, the precursor to Archie Comics. Armed with his drawings wrapped in old newspaper, 11-year-old Kubert hopped on the subway from Brooklyn and headed for



FAX-BASED TALE The 1996 graphic novel *Fax from Sarajevo*, written and illustrated by Kubert, unflinchingly depicted one man's struggle to rescue his family from the war-torn country.

Manhattan's Canal Street.

"They looked at me like I came from another planet," laughs Kubert. "'What the hell is this kid doing here with all these drawings?' It wasn't as if this happened every day."

The studio crew took to Kubert, rewarding his enthusiasm with trade lessons on how to use a brush and pointers on inking. While Kubert absorbed the training, what lingers with him is something very different.

"I can still remember the smell of the place," Kubert fondly recalls. "The smell of the paper, the smell of the ink, the smell of the office, the dust."

Kubert the art junkie was hooked, addicted to the studio's sights and smells. His eyes opened to the exciting world of being a comic book artist—or "cartoonist," as Kubert lovingly calls his craft. By the time he was 13 or 14, he was working regularly, bringing home as much money as his father, a butcher.

One of the ideals that accompanied many immigrant families to America was pragmatism. Occupations that weren't considered "real jobs" were discouraged. Kubert never had that problem.

"My father always appreciated the passion with which I approached drawing," says Kubert. "I used to pencil all the time. I drew my family. My father recognized this passion and encouraged it."

The ultimate father-son test came in the form of a drawing table. The family would regularly pass an art store, and the teenaged Kubert would drool at the fancy table in the window.

"I used to lust for that table," he says. 'My father knew how much I wanted it. He took $11 out of the cash register, a lot of money at the time, and got me that table."

Kubert still proudly owns that first table. He's replaced the top on numerous occasions, and it holds a special place in his heart.

"It reflected that, subconsciously, I was taking a major step toward being a professional," Kubert reasons.

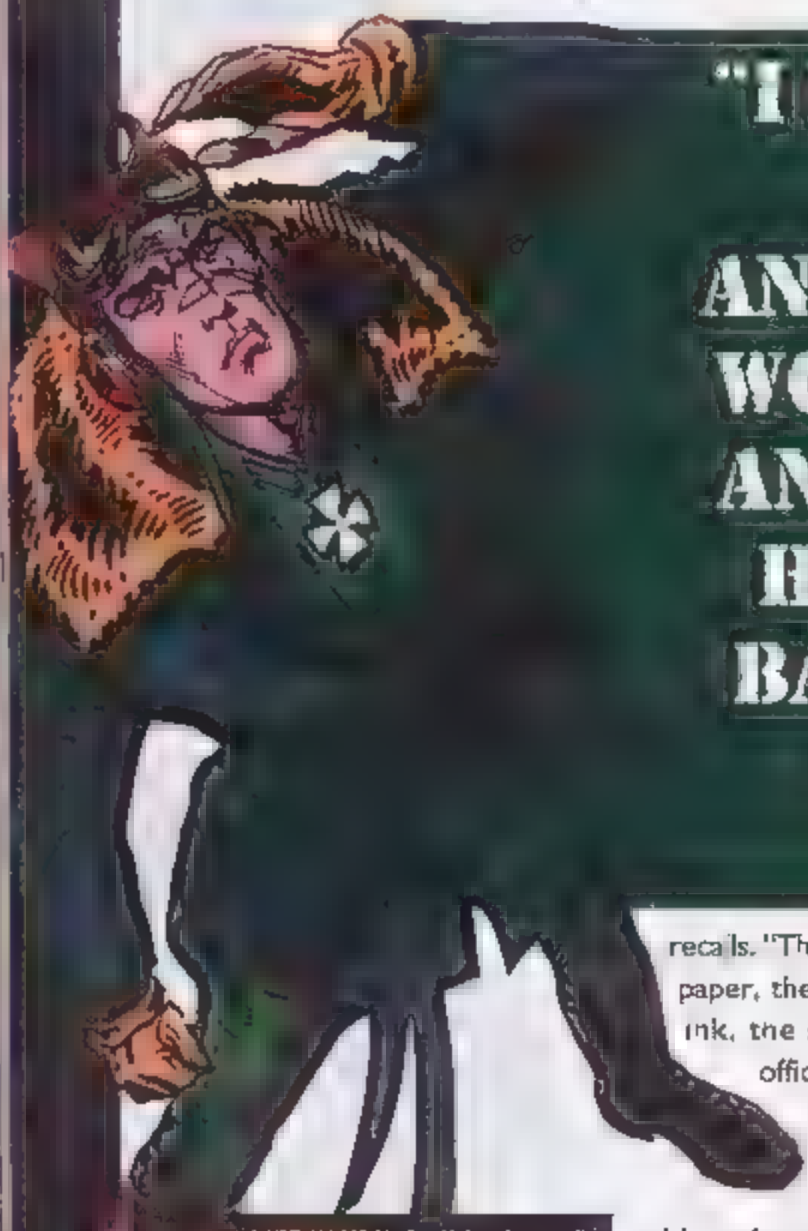
Kubert got his first big break from Shelly Mayer at All-American Comics with a gig penciling Hawkman in *Flash Comics* while he was still in high school. Under the tutelage of Mayer, Kubert worked at DC for seven years, guiding Hawkman until *Flash Comics*' cancellation in 1949. One year later, Kubert would find himself drafted, headed for the Korean War.

While never seeing active duty—Kubert worked as a designer in a sign shop and on the army newspaper—his army experience helped shape his work on *Our Army at War* and *Star-Spangled War Stories*. With the gruff yet good-hearted Sgt. Rock and lone wolf German fighter pilot Enemy Ace, Kubert helped craft some of the most vivid war tales in comics history.

Kubert found consistent work in the 1950s and early 1960s, penciling a Hawkman revival, inking the first incarnation of the Silver Age Flash and drawing the first 24 issues of *Brave and the Bold*.

"I have never had one day of unemployment," admits Kubert. "And I have never been in fear of not getting a job. My feeling has always been, 'Well, geez, if I couldn't make a living in this, I'll do something else. I'll do dishes, whatever.'"

Fortunately, dishwashing has never been necessary. In fact, Kubert's humility has been one of the factors that's endeared him to co-collaborators and editors alike.



"I HAVE HONESTLY NEVER HEARD ANYONE SAY A BAD WORD ABOUT JOE, AND I HAVE NEVER HEARD JOE SAY A BAD WORD ABOUT ANYONE ELSE".

—NEAL ADAMS, legendary comics artist

ACES HIGH Under Kubert's pencil, German pilot Enemy Ace became one of DC's classic war characters.

FALLEN HEROES Kubert contributed this piece for Marvel's *Heroes* 9/11 tribute book.

"I have honestly never heard anyone say a bad word about Joe, and I have never heard Joe say a bad word about anyone else," says Adams.

"He's a legend," continues Mike Chen, a 1981 Kubert School grad who works as the special projects coordinator at the school. "But if you bring this to his attention, he starts shuffling his feet, hanging his head and he can't deal with the concept. He knows he's accomplished things, but he doesn't act like a superstar."

Don't confuse Kubert's humility with lack of self-confidence. He has an unwavering faith in his craft but possesses the ability to solicit and accept criticism. A large bespectacled man with a salt-and-pepper flecked beard, Kubert has an intimidating effect on many people. Kubert's industry reputation began to mirror the Sgt. Rock character that would help define his career—a rock-solid man of integrity.

"[Editor] Jack Adler at DC once said, 'Joe, you're like a rock. Nothing fazes you, nothing affects you,'" recalls Kubert. "To some extent, it is true. I've always felt confident about my work."

Kubert's confidence was never more evident than during the 1960s, when his gritty pencils and vivid covers, combined with writer Bob Kanigher's in-depth characterization, helped make Sgt. Rock in *Our Army at War* the defining war character of its generation. "Bob had the ability to convey to me the pictures he wanted to such effect that I could see the pictures in my head so clearly," says Kubert.

Graduating to an editor's position at DC before embarking on the biggest gamble of his career in 1976, Kubert launched the Kubert School when a 23-room mansion near his New Jersey home became available. Kubert consulted with his wife, Miriam, and made a calculated business decision. There was a void for higher education and training for comic artists taught by paid professionals, and Kubert was determined to fill it.

"I am not a gambler," insists Kubert. "However, in business I will take chances. Can I live with having lost whatever investment we made and still go on? That's the way my wife and I made our decision."

Kubert went forward with one condition—he would not allow the school to interfere with his drawing career.

Deciding he didn't want more than 300 total students and no more

ROCK STEADY

Kristy Azzarello remembers the moment when Vertigo Editor Karen Berger told her that Joe Kubert was interested in working on the Sgt. Rock project. Azzarello was already excited.

"I said I'd be happy to," adds Azzarello.

Berger then explained that Kubert—whose career has been defined by his artistic run on *Sgt. Rock* and *Our Army at War*—wanted to work with Azzarello.

Azzarello (*Hip Gnosis*) will step down with Kubert on *Sgt. Rock: Between Hell and a Hard Place*, a 128-page hardcover slated for 2003.

"It's working as hell," exclaims Kubert. "I found working on Kristy's writing invigorating and challenging."

The World War II tale finds Rock's Easy Company embedded in a war zone in which the Allied Forces suffer such extreme casualties the majority of officers die the first week. As a result, survivors are rapidly promoted, promotions they aren't prepared for.

"Sergeants didn't make the kind of decisions Rock made," says Azzarello. "By killing off all the officers, we didn't have that problem."

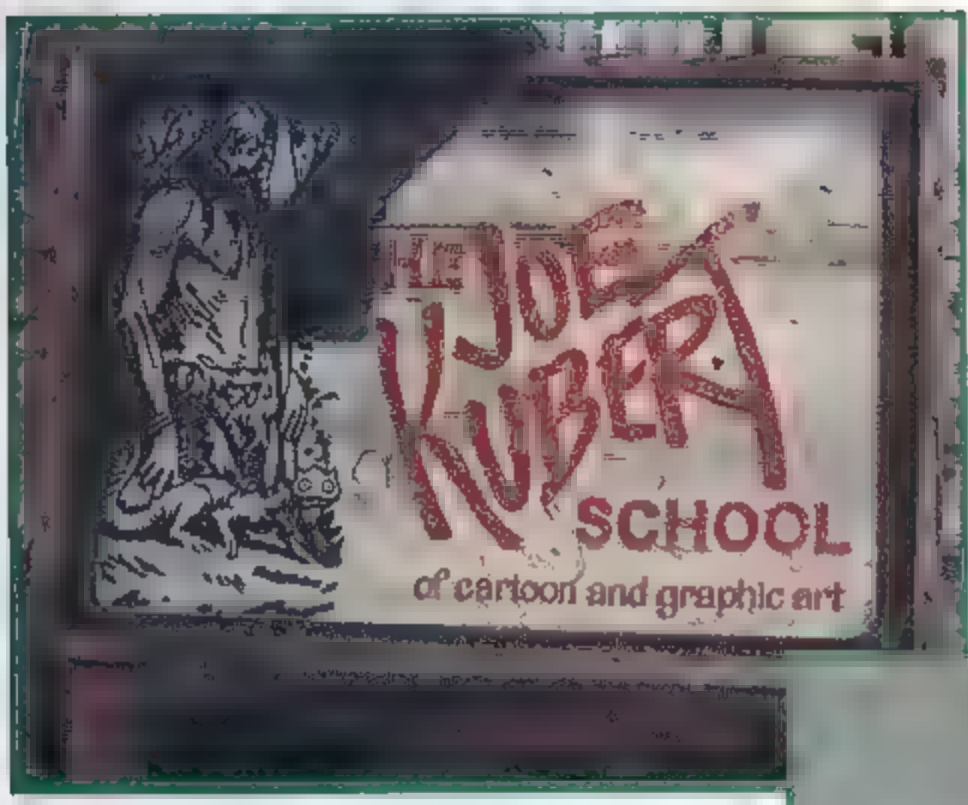
One condition that Kubert placed upon committing to the project was that the graphic language—a staple in Azzarello's mature-themed books—needed to be toned down.

"I've always had the feeling that my parents are going to see what I am doing, my kids, my grandchildren," says Kubert. "If I feel uncomfortable, I won't do it. Not at this stage in the game."

As a result, phrases such as "frickin'" will be used instead of more popular expletives, which is fine by Azzarello.

"I understand where he's coming from," says Azzarello. "But out respect for him and the character, I want to get this right." ■ JY

SARGE IN CHARGE With no lieutenants around to bark out orders, Sgt. Rock will have to make some tough choices in the upcoming *Hell and a Hard Place*.



than 22 per classroom, Kubert's initial guidelines still exist today. (For more on the school, visit **www.kubertsworld.com**.) Despite his humble protests, the school would be named The Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art. Kubert had no illusions about his role.

"I told [my students] up front, 'I'm not a teacher,'" he remembers. "'What I am going to do is merely show you and tell you how I do what I do.'"

The first year was a blur. Twenty-two lives were in Kubert's hands looking for guidance while he dealt with the everyday details of running a school. Everything from housing to basic maintenance to curriculum guidelines served as an eye-opening experience.

"We were so naive and innocent," laughs Kubert. "If I knew what we had to do 10 years after we opened the school, I would never had done it. Never."

But for that first group of students, the kinetic energy was palpable. They were in on the ground floor of something special and they knew it.

"All of us were from the hinterlands," says Veitch, Class of '76. "We all loved comics but didn't know people who did this kind of work. All of a sudden, we were thrown in a room with like-minded individuals... can't tell you how much fun I had." Other famous Kubert School alumni include Tim Truman (*Hawkworld*), Tom Mandrake (*Creeps*), Bart Sears (*The Path*) and Jan Duursema (*Star Wars*).

The school has grown over the years, moving in 1983 to the former Dover High School, the same high school that Adam and Andy attended. The sons' path to the school was far different than most students.

While Adam and Andy both lettered for Joe growing up, they resisted following in dad's footsteps, as did the other three Kubert children.

"I wanted to go away and pursue my own path," explains Adam. "I didn't want to follow his footsteps. Because they were *huge* footsteps."

Adam completed the prestigious medical illustration program at RIT before deciding to alter his career path. Andy followed Adam to RIT before deciding the program wasn't for him after six months. Both entered the Kubert School with dad's blessing. But it came with a warning.

"I said, 'If anything goes wrong, you're out,'" says Kubert. "'I am not going to jeopardize what works here for so many years just to accommodate you two guys.'"

True to their Kubert heritage, neither son wanted any favors. Trying to fly below the nepotism radar, teachers simply called out Adam and Andy during attendance, no last name announced.

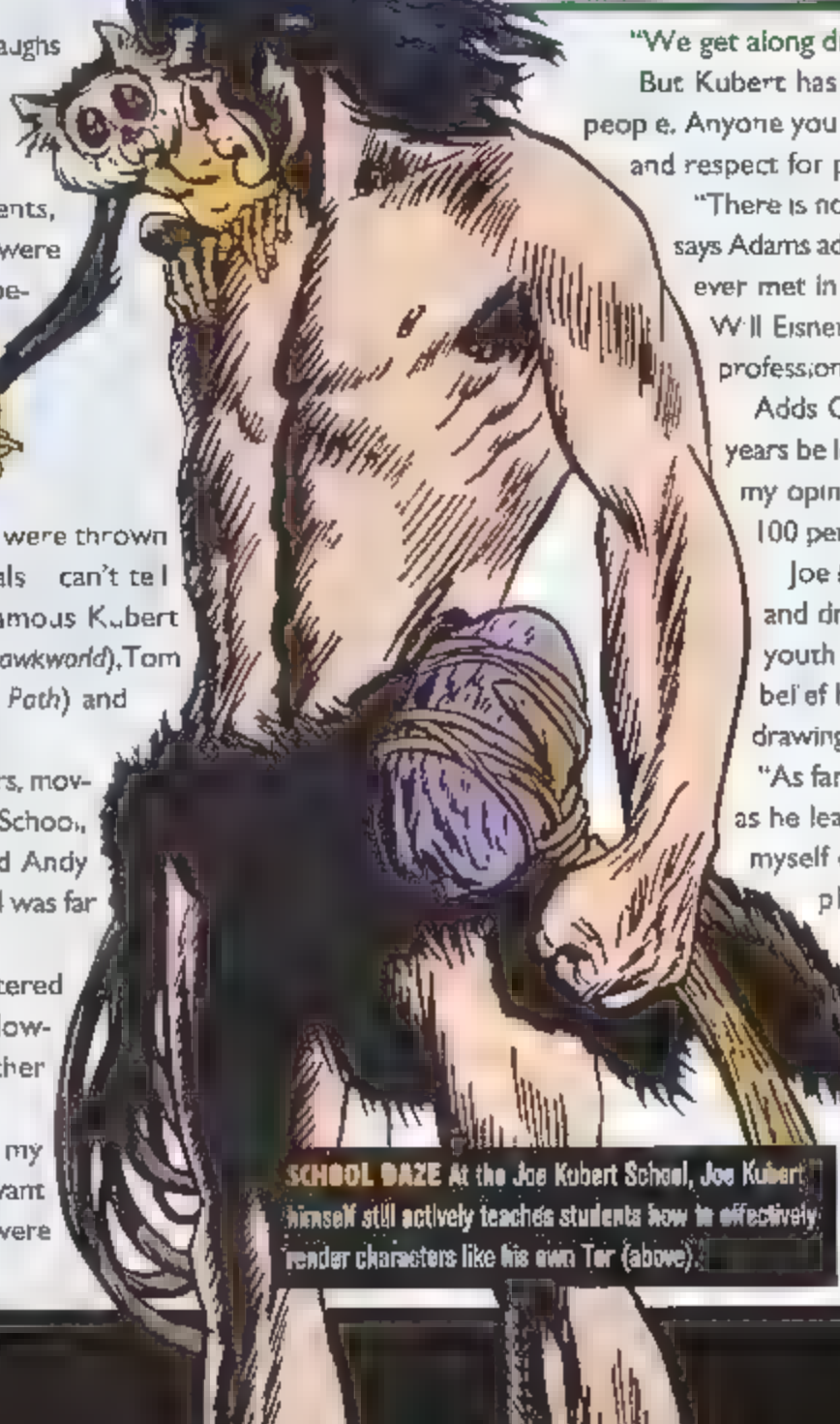
Needless to say, the Kubert sons flourished, parlaying the experience into über-successful art careers. They have returned to the flock, having just completed their first year of teaching at the school.

"We get along disgustingly well," laughs Andy. But Kubert has always gotten along well with people. Anyone you speak to marvels at his passion and respect for people and his craft.

"There is nothing as rare as a good person," says Adams admiringly. "Of all the people I have ever met in comics, I have admired Joe and Will Eisner the most, both personally and professionally."

Adds Chen: "I have seen him over the years be incredibly loyal, even to people in my opinion who didn't deserve it. He's 100 percent in anything he believes."

Joe Kubert has believed in comics—and drawing—ever since his days as a youth scrawling on the sidewalk. That belief has never wavered, even after a drawing career spanning nearly 75 years. "As far as I'm concerned," Kubert says as he leans back in his chair, "I consider myself one of the most fortunate people in the world. How many people do you know that get to do what they love every day? That's me."



SCHOOL DAZE At the Joe Kubert School, Joe Kubert himself still actively teaches students how to effectively render characters like his own Tor (above).

Senior Managing Editor Joe Yanarella has believed in comics ever since his days as a roadie for Louie Anderson.

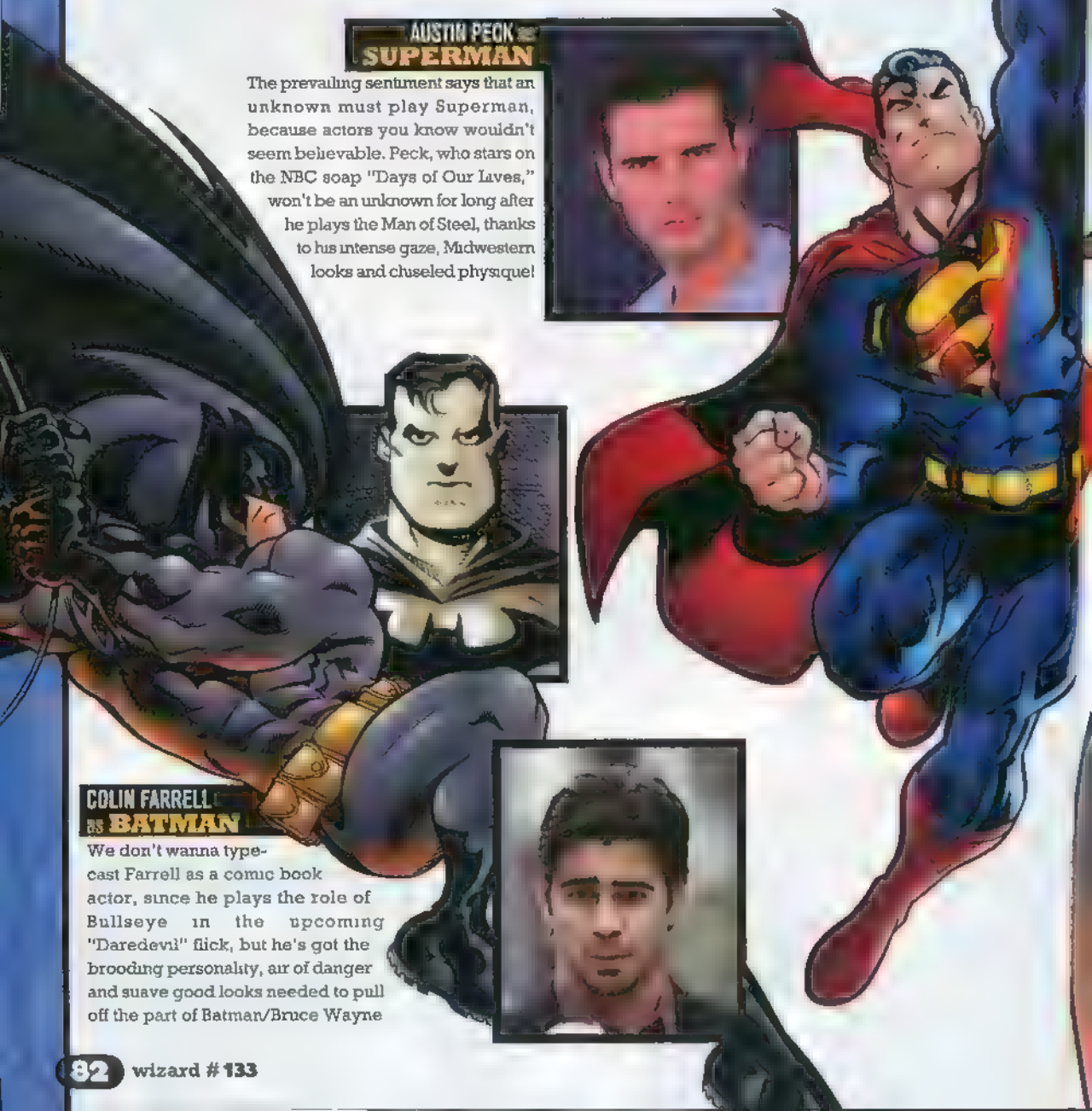
CASTING call

WIZARD casts the BATMAN/SUPERMAN MOVIE!

Talk about a heavyweight showdown! Ever since Warner Bros. announced they'd be doing a "Batman vs. Superman" feature film—to be directed by "The Perfect Storm" helmer Wolfgang Petersen—fans have been forecasting who's going to play the two comic book icons. With tons of speculation running rampant, we thought we'd chime in with our two cents about who should play the Dark Knight and the Man of Steel—as well as their love interests and antagonists. So sit back, grab a sack of popcorn, and get ready for *Wizard*'s World's Finest "Casting Call"! (For more on this story, turn to page 86!)

AUSTIN PECK as SUPERMAN

The prevailing sentiment says that an unknown must play Superman, because actors you know wouldn't seem believable. Peck, who stars on the NBC soap "Days of Our Lives," won't be an unknown for long after he plays the Man of Steel, thanks to his intense gaze, Midwestern looks and chiseled physique!

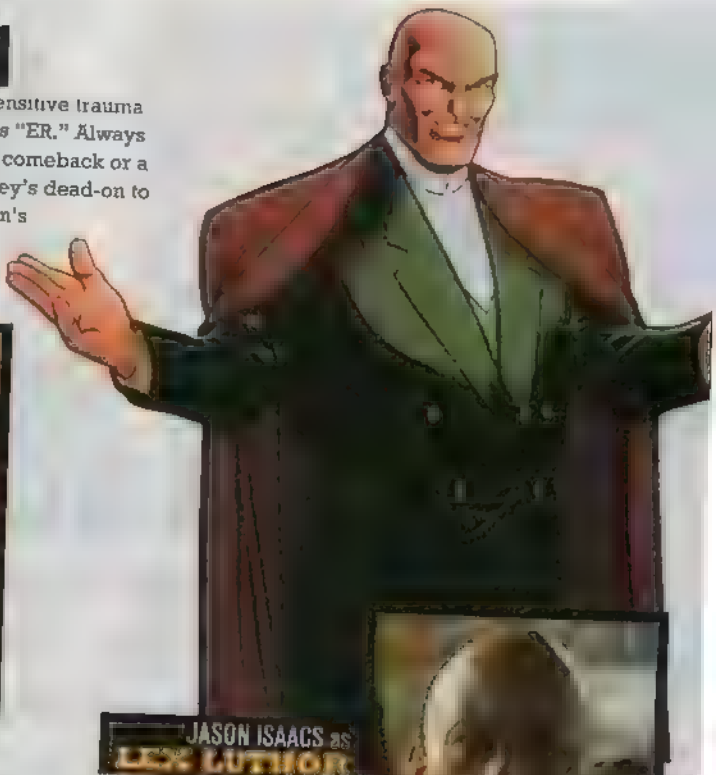


COLIN FARRELL as BATMAN

We don't wanna type-cast Farrell as a comic book actor, since he plays the role of Bullseye in the upcoming "Daredevil" flick, but he's got the brooding personality, air of danger and suave good looks needed to pull off the part of Batman/Bruce Wayne

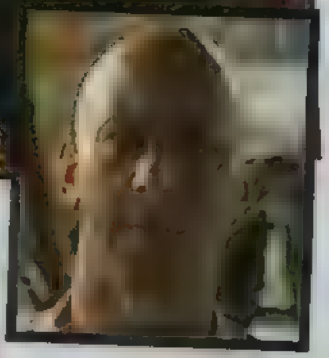
MAURA TIERNEY as LOIS LANE

Tierney plays the tough-but-sensitive trauma nurse Abby Lockhart on NBC's "ER." Always ready with a quick verbal comeback or a shoulder to cry on, Tierney's dead-on to nail the part of Superman's lady love and bulldog *Daily Planet* reporter, Lois Lane



JASON ISAACS as LEX LUTHOR

If you've seen him play the heavy in "Black Hawk Down" or "The Patriot," you know Isaacs has the chops to play the *über*-rich and ultra-evil Donald Trump of Metropolis, Lex Luthor, a.k.a. Superman's archenemy

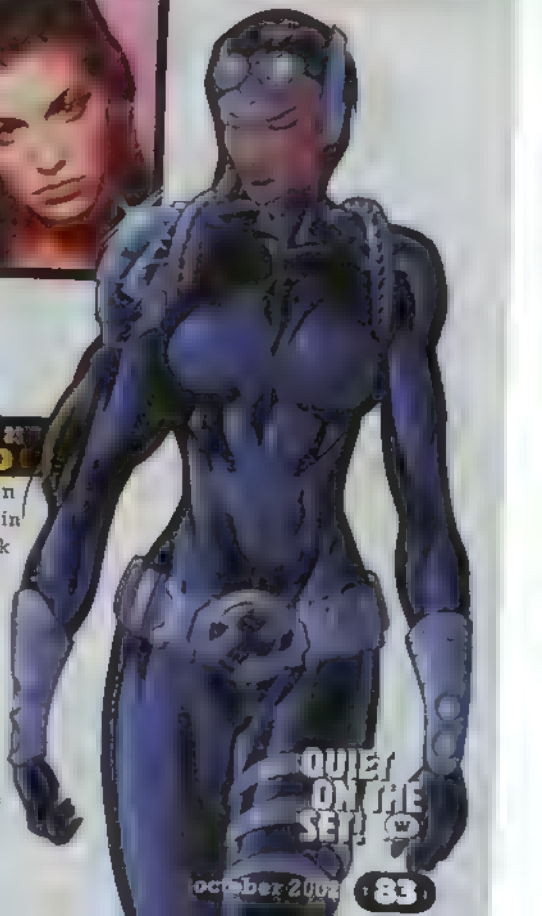


TERENCE STAMP as RA'S AL GHUL

Stamp beat the crap outta Superman as General Zod in "Superman II," he helped rule the galaxy as Chancellor Valorum in "Phantom Menace," and he kicked mobster behind as "The Limey." Could anyone else portray the immortal Demon's Head and Bat-nemesis named Ra's Al Ghul?

BIANCA KAJLICH as TALIA HEAD

You may have seen Kajlich's recent bow in the slasher flick "Halloween: Resurrection," but we'd pick her in a Gotham City minute to tackle the role of Ra's Al Ghul's deadly, seductive daughter—and possible love interest to Bruce Wayne/Batman!



A 'HELLBOY' OF A GOOD TIME

Director Guillermo del Toro talks up the trials of helming the 'Hellboy' movie

Guillermo del Toro has endured five years of hell for his latest project . five years of Hellboy, that is

The 37-year-old Mexican director transplants his lifelong love of comics to the silver screen with "Hellboy," a 2003 feature film release from Revolution Studios. The flick will be closely based on Mike Mignola's Dark Horse comic, which features a reluctant good-guy demon summoned to Earth at the end of World War II.

Del Toro, who received massive critical acclaim for "The Devil's Backbone," a 2001 release about a haunted Spanish orphanage, is even turning his back on another prize comic gig. He directed "Blade II" starring Wesley Snipes and was in line for "III, ' but opted instead to direct "Hellboy."

As he sat down to discuss "Hellboy," del Toro brought with him his comic fandom, which he wears on his sleeve. Hell, he even knows how young Hellboy used to mispronounce "pancakes."

WIZARD: Doing "Hellboy" means not being able to direct "Blade III." Was that a tough choice?

DEL TORO: Oh, no. It was very easy. Although I would have enjoyed "Blade III" very much, "Hellboy" is an incredibly personal project for me. I've been with it for five years, and you don't stick with it for five years unless you love it deeply. In the end, the decision was no contest.

I told my wife that there are two movies that I had to do in my life, and then I would be super-happy to just retire. Those are "Hellboy" and "Devil's Backbone." That's the way I feel about this movie.

So just what were you doing on this five years ago?

I became involved with it in late '97, talking to Mike [Mignola] and adapting it into a screenplay, and then going through hundreds of different permutations of studios, producers, different locations, possibilities of actors, you name it. And all the while, I was hoping it would happen the way it is happening, which is with Mike Mignola involved from the get-go all the way through post-production, and with Ron Perlman as Hellboy. So I am very happy with that

You wrote the screenplay as well. What's the movie about?

It's the *Seed of Destruction* [comic storyarc]. It's essentially the origin story of Hellboy. We set up the mythology of the characters, and I was very delicate in doing that Whenever I

HELLACIOUS HELMER Director Guillermo del Toro says directing "Hellboy" is the dream project of his career.

AGE

Photos: New Line Cinema

"Hellboy's the Beast of the Apocalypse on the outside, and he's a regular guy on the inside. [He] came to destroy the world, but he really just wants to relax and have a beer."

—Guillermo del Toro, 'Hellboy' movie director

wanted to alter something from that storyline, I'd talk to Mike and explain to him why. I was very detail-oriented, because I'm a fan. That makes it tough. Sometimes as a fan, you want to cram everything from the comic into the screenplay. And you have to be more discerning than that. It was *painful* to be that discerning, because I was like a kid in a candy store! I wanted *everything*!

In being so discerning, what elements are you keeping and what are you leaving behind?

The main thing is to leave intact what makes the comic great. If you don't touch any of the vital lifelines of the comic, then the movie will be very much in the spirit of the comic. I think that was the secret of "Spider-Man's" success. Peter Parker *was* a nerd. He became Spider-Man, and he was a little flabbergasted, a little elated, and really didn't fully understand.

So what's your take on keeping Hellboy true to his comic roots?

With Hellboy, he's the Beast of the Apocalypse on the outside, and he's a regular guy on the inside. That's the greatest thing in the story. This thing came from another dimension to destroy the world, but he really just wants to relax and have a beer.

Mike created a blue-collar demon, a working stiff. It's almost like Hellboy does his job with a big monkey wrench and a lunchbox. He says, "Who do I have to beat today? The monster? Do I have to *fight* the monster? Maybe I can just talk to him, and then we won't have to fight. No? Oh, well." He'd really just love to stay home, watch TV, and grab a beer. But still, if you piss him off, he's *totally* brutal. It's never been done in film or any medium to have the reluctant *demon*.

How do you go about portraying that in the film?

We have to capture his temper and his dialogue, which are tough things to do. He's not a one-liner character. He speaks in very short, very concise sentences. His style is almost like Hemmingway superhero dialogue.

The other thing that makes the comic work is that even though you're using this common-man approach toward horror, you're still totally immersed in this pulp-flavored, Lovecraftian universe. One has to exist with the other. It's that duality between the real and the fantastical that I like.

You mentioned Ron Perlman earlier, and how you wanted him right from the start. What's the appeal there?

Ron Perlman *is* Hellboy. His persona, his way of speaking, his voice, his presence. Everything about him *is* Hellboy.

It's funny. The first time Mike Mignola and I met, we were eyeballing each other a little warily. I said, "Well, there's only one thing that we may have a problem about, and it's casting. There's only one guy who can play Hellboy." Then he goes, "Well, I'm afraid I have my choice and it's Ron Perlman." I said, "Okay, that's mine, too!" So that was nice it worked out that way!

Trust me: It was not easy to make a $60 million movie starring Ron Perlman. We didn't have backers immediately. It took labor, and it's a labor of love. I'm very happy to say we have the right actor here.

You've done "Blade II." You're doing this. Do you have another comic project in you?

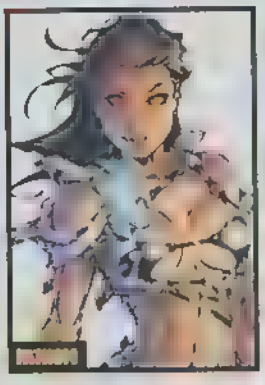
The only one I have that even comes close to the superhero genre is *The Coffin* (based on the Oni mini-series), which I'm developing with Jim Cameron. Other than that, the comics I'm attracted to are far, far more quirky. I love Otomo's *Domu*. We're still clearing the rights to that. I know lawyers are complex, and the only thing *more* complex is a Japanese lawyer. It's amazing. I don't want to give up, but, boy, am I dented.

Will Hellboy eat pancakes in the movie?

That's "pamcakes," with an "M"! [*Laughs*] Absolutely. That *will* be in the movie. ■ JIM McLAUCHLIN

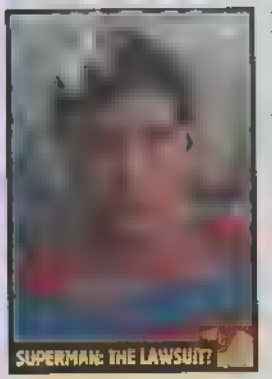
TRAILERS...

WRITER DIVES INTO FATHOM The "Fathom" live action film, being developed by James Cameron and Lightstorm Entertainment, moved one step closer to commencement with the announcement that screenwriter Linda Woolverton has been tapped to pen the script. Woolverton's credits include Disney's "The Lion King," "Homeward Bound," the Elton John musical "Aida" and "Beauty and the Beast," which was the first animated film to ever receive a Best Picture nomination from the Academy Awards. Based on the Top Cow comic, "Fathom" tells the story of Aspen Matthews, a young woman descended from an ancient underwater race who's found on an abandoned yacht with no memory of her past but possessing immense water-based superpowers.



HOLY SPRINGFIELD On the Nov. 24 episode of "The Simpsons," Adam West and Burt Ward make a guest appearance to reprise their Batman and Robin roles. When Bart and Milhouse catch an episode of the classic TV series, they see the Dynamic Duo fighting a villain named Clown Man who bears an uncanny resemblence to Krusty the Klown.

SUPER SUIT Pixelle Film Licensing Ltd. recently filed a copyright infringement suit in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles against Warner Bros. over bonus material the studio used as VHS and DVD extras for "Superman: The Movie," which was released last year. The U.K.-based film licenser alleges that the studio re-edited and altered the film by using additional scenes not included in the original release, and that on the DVD, eight of the bonus chapters included such footage. The suit is seeking unspecified damages, legal fees and an injunction barring Warner Bros. from further distributing the videos and DVDs. Warner Bros., citing company policy on pending lawsuits, declined comment.



SUPERMAN: THE LAWSUIT?

SHORT TAKES In Emmy news, Cartoon Network's "Justice League" was nominated for an "Outstanding Main Title Theme Music," while The WB's "Smallville" received nominations for "Outstanding Visual Effects For a Series" and "Outstanding Sound Editing for a Series." Check out the 54th annual Emmys on Sept. 22 on NBC...In other "Justice League" news, the second season bows on Sept. 7, with a 90-minute episode that sees the League travel back in time and team up with Sgt. Rock and the Backhawks to battle Vandal Savage...Mia Sara ("Timecop") has replaced Sherilyn Fenn as Harley Quinn on the upcoming WB show, "Birds of Prey,"...Senator Int. has snared the film rights to IDW Publishing's *30 Days of Night*, a mini-series by Steve Niles about a band of vampires who attack an Alaskan town during a month-long night...20th Century Fox has tapped "Resident Evil" director Paul Anderson to tackle the long-struggling "Alien vs. Predator" feature film, which was originally published as a comic mini-series by Dark Horse in 1990. ■ **THE WIZARD STAFF**

WB GETS MOVIN' ON WORLD'S FINEST FLICK

Pull out your tights and dust off your capes for the World's Finest superhero film.

Warner Bros. Pictures recently announced that "Batman vs. Superman" is being put on the schedule and fast tracked for a 2004 release. The studio has tapped director Wolfgang Petersen ("The Perfect Storm," "In the Line of Fire") to helm the pic starring DC Comics' two biggest superhero icons, who once starred together in the Silver Age comic title, *World's Finest*.

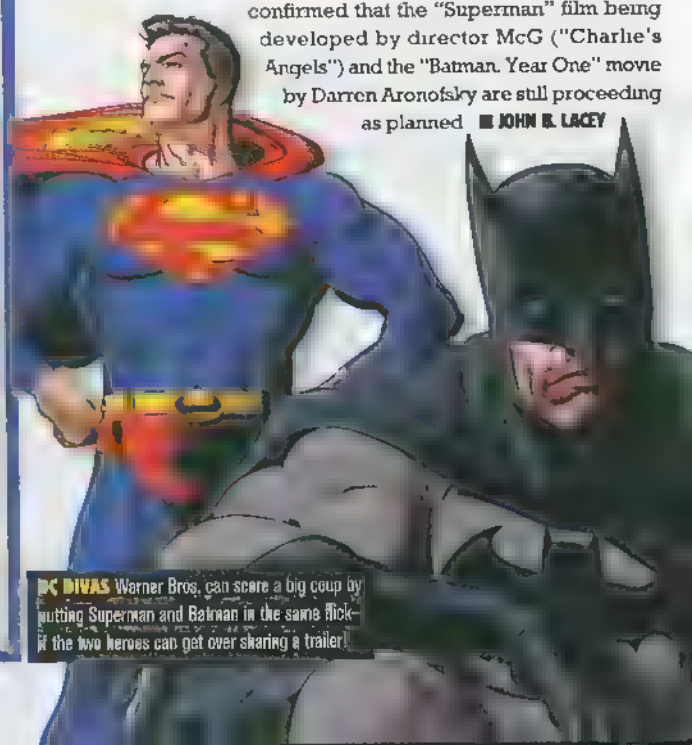
"It's a clash of the titans," said Petersen in published reports. "They play off of each other so perfectly. Superman is clear, bright, all that is noble and good. And Batman represents the dark, obsessive and vengeful side. They are two sides of the same coin, and that is material for great drama."

"Seven" screenwriter Andrew Kevin Walker penned the story, which sees the two superheroes coming to blows over their respective methods of crimefighting. While Petersen wouldn't give away specific plot details, he did hint that "much of the conflict is because of the different philosophies that they represent. For a large portion of the thing, they are at each other's throats. But then, of course, because they are both crimefighters, they join forces again to fight evil."

No casting decisions have been made as yet, but Christian Bale ("Reign of Fire") and Colin Farrell ("Daredevil") are rumored to be the frontrunners for the part of Batman/Bruce Wayne, while everyone from Paul Rudd ("Clueless") to Vince Vaughn ("Made") to Jude Law ("Road to Perdition") has been mentioned for the role of Clark Kent/Superman. But one thing's for certain. Petersen's not looking for the Next Big Action Star.

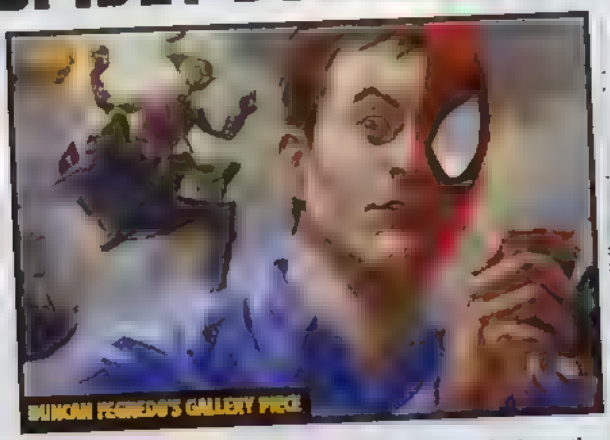
"Everything after Sept. 11 is different," noted Petersen. "You want to change the image of these superheroes. We have a script that really very, very much concentrates on the characters. It's really material for two great actors." [**EDITOR'S NOTE** *To see who Wizard would cast, head over to "Casting Call" on page 82!*]

So what does "Batman vs. Superman," as it's tentatively titled for now, mean to the respective individual Batman and Superman film franchise? Apparently, not much—Warner Bros. Pictures confirmed that the "Superman" film being developed by director McG ("Charlie's Angels") and the "Batman: Year One" movie by Darren Aronofsky are still proceeding as planned. ■ **JOHN B. LACEY**



DC DIVAS Warner Bros. can score a big coup by putting Superman and Batman in the same flick—if the two heroes can get over sharing a trailer!

SPIDEY DVD SNARES FANBOYS LIKE FLIES


DUNCAN FEGREDO'S GALLERY PIECE

If you thought Spider-Man made a huge splash on the big screen, just wait until you see what the Web-head has planned for his DVD.

According to Javier Soto, manager of worldwide DVD content for Columbia Tri-Star Entertainment, the "Spider-Man" DVD, available on Nov. 1, will blow fans away with two discs full of content.

"This is going to be a very special DVD," explained Soto. "Since 'Spider-Man' was such a huge film (it grossed over $400 million), we wanted to make sure the DVD held up. We wanted to pack as much as possible on it. With all we fit on there, I think fans have something to really look forward to."

Soto revealed the DVD will contain three Spider-Man comics, including *Spider Man: Blue* #1, *Black Cat/Spider-Man: The Evil That Men Do* #1 and *Peter Parker: Spider-Man* #45, featuring the return of the Green Goblin. The DVD also contains original Spider-Man pin-ups by artists such as John Romita Sr., John Romita Jr., Mike Allred, John Cassaday and many other comic pros, commentary tracks by director Sam Raimi and actress Kirsten Dunst; a Spider-Man comic book cover library; and profiles on Spidey's greatest foes like The Lizard, the Vulture and the Hobgoblin.

And if you're a die-hard Spidey fan, you may wanna pick up the "Collector's DVD Gift Set," which features the widescreen special edition of the film and includes a reprint of Spidey's first appearance, *Amazing Fantasy* #15, a collectible drawing by the Romitas and a numbered film cel from the movie.

Here's a rundown of everything on the "Spider-Man" DVD, but Soto did reveal a Special Edition DVD is already in the works, containing even more extras and a copy of "Stan Lee's Mutants, Monsters and Marvels," in which Kevin Smith interviews Marvel's Chairman Emeritus about co-creating Spider-Man and the rest of the Marvel Universe. ■ MIKE COTTON

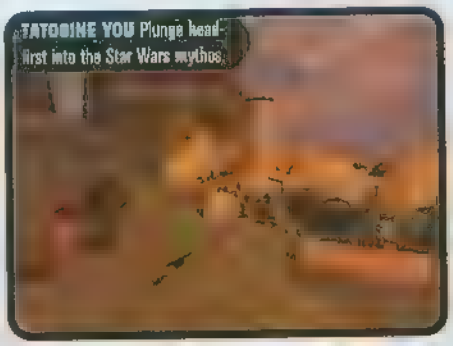
DISC ONE
Audio: English and French 5.1 (Dolby Digital)
Subtitles: English, French and Spanish
Subtitled Featurette, "Weaving the Web"
Pop-Up Production Notes and Historical Facts
Commentary: Sam Raimi (director); Laura Ziskin (producer); Kirsten Dunst (Mary Jane Watson) and Grant Curtis (co-producer)
SFX Commentary: John Bykstra (special effects designer) and visual effects crew
Branching Web-Tracking (access via Spider-Sense)
Marketing Campaigns: Trailers and TV Spots
Filmographies and Character Files
Music Videos: Chad Kroeger featuring Josey Scott, "Hero" and Sum 41: "What We're All About"
DVD-ROM: Comic/Premiere Comparison; Record Your Own Commentary; Countdown to "Spider-Man 2"; Weblinks
DISC TWO
Spider-Man: an E! Entertainment Special
Profiles of Sam Raimi and Danny Elfman
Screen Tests: Tobey Maguire, J.K. Simmons and CGI Spider-Man
Costume and Makeup Tests
Cast/Costume Test
Conceptual Art and Production Gallery
Documentary: "Spider-Man: The Mythology of the 21st Century," including interviews with Spider-Man co-creator Stan Lee, Marvel Editor-in-Chief Joe Quesada, Spider-Man editor Ann Nocenti and Wizard's own publisher Gareb Shamus and editor Brian Cunningham
The "Spider-Man" Comic Book Archives
Rogues Gallery
The Laws of Power Poster
Comic Book Artist Pin-Up Gallery with artwork by Mike Allred, John Cassaday, Kevin Maguire, J.H. Jones, Tony DeZuniga, Sam Kieth, David Mack, Kevin Nowlan, Michael Avon Oeming, Chris Bachalo, Dave Johnson (left), Joe Lee, Frank Quitely, Alex Maleev and many more!
Activision Game: Hints and Tips
DVD-ROM: Activision Game (two playable levels for PC); three exclusive Marvel Comics (Spider-Man: Blue #1; Spider-Man/Black Cat #1 and Peter Parker: Spider-Man #45); Spider-Man: Visualizer
DAVE JOHNSON'S GALLERY PIECE

'A NEW HOPE' FOR STAR WARS GAMERS

In this online RPG, meet up with Luke, Leia...or just go Solo

In "Episode I," the Jedi Council speaks of the One who will bring balance to the Force. Thus December, that may very well be you.

Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided is a massively multiplayer online roleplaying game (MMORPG) series being developed for the PC by Sony Online Entertainment and LucasArts that will allow thousands of players from all around the world to explore the Star Wars Universe together. (A space expansion, which will introduce star fighters and other craft to the game, will be released sometime in 2003.)

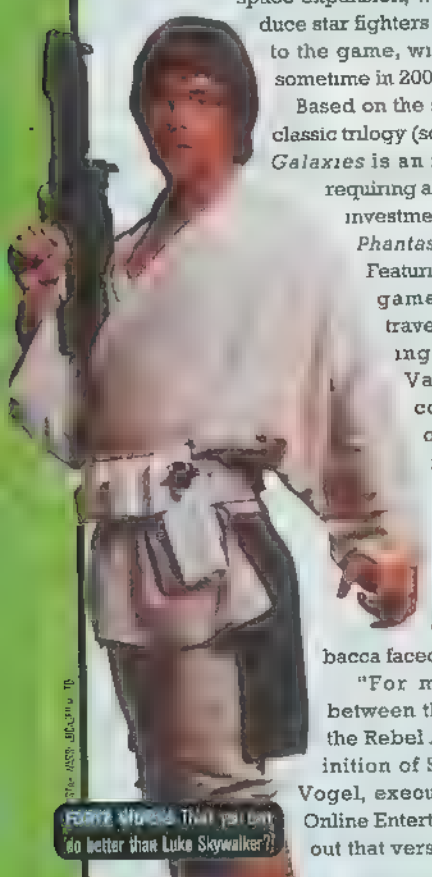


Based on the storyline of the classic trilogy (sorry, no Jar Jar), *Galaxies* is an involved RPG requiring a significant time investment, moreso than *Phantasy Star Online*. Featuring even deeper game play, space travel, chance meetings with Darth Vader and Rancors, and the opportunity to create and maintain the life of their own personal Star Warrior, players will be hard-pressed to put this game down once they start. Every choice that Luke, Greedo or even Chewbacca faced will be theirs.

"For many fans, the battle between the Galactic Empire and the Rebel Alliance is the very definition of Star Wars," states Rich Vogel, executive producer for Sony Online Entertainment, who also points out that versions for the PS2 and the Xbox are being developed. "We wanted to re-create that epic era in the Star Wars timeline and provide players with a true sense of what it would be like to experience the civil war first-hand."

For Star Wars fans not familiar with this type of game, a massively multiplayer online RPG allows gamers to play simultaneously with thousands of other players all over the world through the Internet. They can be teammates or enemies, exploring different worlds, discovering hidden items, collecting weapons and earning money, all while building their character's stats and levels, growing more powerful and intimidating—or fun-loving and friendly! It's up to the individual what route they take. The best aspect of all is sharing these moments with other players. Sometimes guilds are formed, where a group of friends trade items, pool resources and watch each other's back.

Players enter the online universe as one of eight well-known Star Wars species to explore more than 10 fully realized planets. Once in the universe, players will be given a wide range of character choices, ranging from soldier to bounty hunter, merchant or smuggler, etc. They also will be able to build droids, form cities or band together to battle common enemies. *Galaxies* will be available for play exclusively online at Sony's The Station (**www.station.com**). May the Force be with you! ■ **MIKEY BENCH**



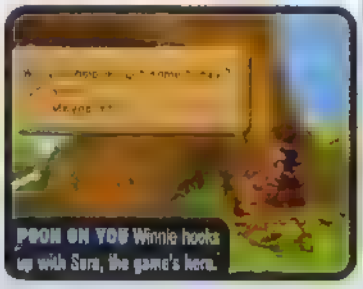
SNEAK PEEK

Players are anxiously awaiting Sony's *Superman: The Man of Steel* (Xbox), one of two Supes games coming from Infogrames. If the following screenshots of Supes' rogues gallery are any indication, let the hype begin!

'HEARTS' AFIRE

Ten reasons to pick up 'Kingdom Hearts'

Not sure if you're gonna get SquareSoft's *Kingdom Hearts* (PS2, Fall) yet? Shame on you. Here's why.



POOH ON YOU Winnie hooks up with Sora, the game's hero.

1. THE PREMISE It's dark. Two worlds are in trouble—a weird amalgamation of Final Fantasy settings and all the Disney movies—and you're the only one who can save it.

2. THE STORY Why you? Because King Mickey is gone, all the Disney villains are banding together to conquer both worlds and it's time for you, Donald Duck and Goofy to kick ass.

DISNEY ROYALTY Queen Minnie and Princess Daisy make appearances.

3. THE LOOK This game is beautiful. From the game design to the animations to the cinemas, this is 10 times more beautiful than *Final Fantasy X*.

4. THE PLAY Take all the RPG brilliance of the Final Fantasy series and pack it full of mini-games and combat action. Did we mention Donald and Goofy fight on their own—no input from you—and they kick ass?

AERIS RETURNS

5. FINAL FANTASY FACTOR The game is chock full of Final Fantasy folk, from *FF VII*'s Cloud, Yuffie and Sephiroth; *FF VIII*'s Squall and Selphie; and *FF X*'s Tidus and Wakka.

6. DISNEY FACTOR Characters from over 60 years of Disney flicks, from "Pinocchio" to "The Little Mermaid" to "Aladdin," are in this game!

7. THE COMBINATION Imagine fighting monsters led by *Peter Pan*'s Captain Hook or *Hercules*' Ice Titan and then having Dumbo attack your enemies, or Bambi to come heal you. It happens.

8. THE VOICES Top-notch talent, including Haley Joel Osment ("A.I."), David Boreanaz ("Angel"), Billy Zane ("Titanic") and singer Mandy Moore voice some of the characters.

9. TETSUYA NOMURA The guy behind *Final Fantasy VII, VIII* and *X* is also in charge of *Kingdom Hearts*. He's making sure this isn't just a kids' game.

10. AERIS Everyone's who's been crying since Aeris died in *Final Fantasy VII* can finally wipe their tears away. She's back, too!

■ ROBERT BRICKEN

VIDEORUMBLINGS

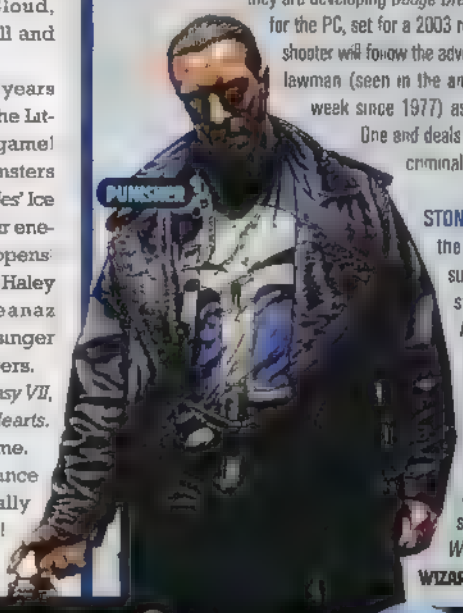
DREAM GAMES Rumors are running rampant that Dreamwave Productions is being courted to develop video game concepts for several big name publishers. It's also been publicized that Dreamwave head honcho and *Transformers* artist Pat Lee is a huge gaming fan and would love to take a crack at a *Metal Gear Solid* or *Street Fighter*-based comic book.

'SOLID' GOLD Pat Lee's rendition of Solid Snake and Co.

THE NEXT WAVE OF RETRO Word on the street is that both the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and *Battle of the Planets* properties are in the final negotiations to become video games. Expect to see digital versions of those heroes in a half shell and the science ninja team as early as 2003.

BRIT WIT *Origin* writer Paul Jenkins is working on several top-secret video game projects for Sony. Hardcore fans will note that this isn't the creator's first video game endeavor; he's done writing for last year's *Twisted Metal Black* for Sony, as well as Eidos' *Soul Reaver 2*.

ENGLISH GEMS U.K.-based Muckyfoot Studios (*Blade 2*), who are developing *The Punisher* for Marvel, said gameplay will be similar to Rockstar's *Grand Theft Auto 3*, letting gamers choose the scope of their vigilantism. Players have the option of focusing on street-level criminals like hoods and purse-snatchers or taking things straight to the top by infiltrating the Mob. Also, Oxford-based Rebellion (*Aliens Versus Predator*) announced they are developing *Judge Dredd Versus Judge Death* for the PC, set for a 2003 release. The first-person shooter will follow the adventures of the legendary lawman (seen in the anthology *2000AD* every week since 1977) as he patrols Mega-City One and deals with a full spectrum of criminal behavior. I am the law!



PUNISHER

STONE COLD SOBER Due to the recent controversies surrounding WWE superstar Stone Cold Steve Austin, THQ will most likely have to remove the Bronic Redneck's likeness from their upcoming *WWE: Smackdown! Shut Your Mouth* for PS2 and the sequel to the Xbox's *WWE Raw Is War*. ■ THE WIZARD STAFF

ANOTHER BIG ROBOT

PHANTOM ZONE CRIMINAL

METALLO

TRANSFORMERS: G1

THE BOOK Sporting the hottest comeback since hip huggers, the Transformers' return to comics has been one of 2002's biggest success stories. It seems like kiddies just can't get enough of Optimus Prime and his loyal Autobots thrashing the Kevlar-plated keesters of those low-down Decepticons. Action, drama and huge honkin' robots—looks like Dreamwave's No. 1 seller has all the right ingredients for a painless "transformation" into a kick-ass video game.

THE GAME Taking a nod from two heavy metal masterpieces, the perfect Transformers game would be a combination of Agetec's *Armored Core* and Sony's *Twisted Metal Black*. Picture a multi-player vehicular combat title with a twist—these vehicles transform into giant robots! Players can choose their favorite robots in disguise and let the sparks fly in a variety of arenas set on both Earth and the Transformers homeworld of Cybertron. And after acquiring enough power-ups, players gain the ability to transform—now the real fun begins!

JUST IMAGINE... Optimus Prime racing through the streets of Cybertron dodging the plasma blasts of Deceptiscum like Megatron and Starscream. All seems lost until he gains the final power-up needed to transform into robot mode, thus turning the tables on his automated aggressors. Or how about a fully powered-up Soundwave unleashing the fury of Ravage, Frenzy and Laserbeak? And Transfans are in for a special treat with a final battle that takes place on the planet-sized entity known as Unicron, which transforms from planet to robot!

REALITY BYTE There's no denying the heat presently surrounding the Transformers. And with a brand-new cartoon series and toyline, can a video game really be that far out of the question? Transfans should keep their optics peeled 'cuz Transformers could be rolling onto your favorite console before you know it. ■ JMcD

METAL MELEE The Autobots and Decepticons duke it out!

Illustration: Christian Moore (www.elkrickianmoore.com)

GENERATION GAP

Gaming greats return for next-gen sequels

Let's do the time warp again! Whether it's TV, comics or toys, retro mania is in full swing. Now the video game industry is following suit with several high-profile returns. Finally, old-school gamers and newbies alike can enjoy the next-generation adventures of gaming's forgotten veterans.

CONTRA: SHATTERED SOLDIER (Konami; PS2; Fall) Classic Contra is back! For nearly a decade hardcore gamers have waited for a sequel worthy of the *Contra* name. Now with the original Contra team, two-player simultaneous play and eye popping PS2 visuals, fans will finally get their wish.

DEFENDER (Midway; PS2; Fall) One of the meanest quarter gobblers of the early '80s makes its triumphant return. Full 3-D graphics and tons of upgradeable hi-tech usher the next generation of hyperspace warfare.

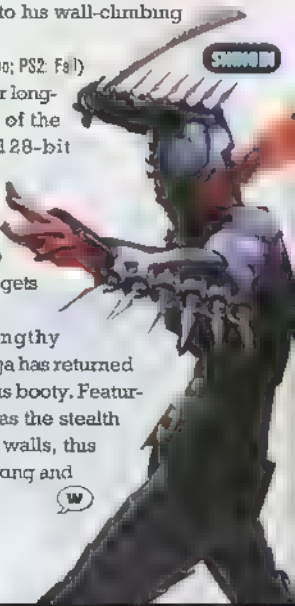
METROID PRIME (Nintendo GAMECUBE; Fall) The Metroid menace has returned and the sexy Samus Aran is the only gal tough enough to squash the little buggers once and for all. This highly anticipated sequel features a combination of classic *Metroid*-style gameplay and first person, shoot-'em-up style action.

MORTAL KOMBAT: DEADLY ALLIANCE (Midway; GAMECUBE, PS2, and Xbox; Fall) Returning to its dark roots, Midway's latest entry in the MK franchise offers up all new warriors, multiple fighting techniques per character and even more spine-shattering, limb-dislocating fatalities. Cheesy techno music optional.

NINJA GAIDEN (Tecmo; Xbox; Spring 2003) The rumors are true! After years of speculation, Tecmo has unveiled their plans for a next-gen *Ninja Gaiden* title. Debuting in 2003 as an Xbox exclusive, the title returns *DOA3* star Ryu Hayabusa to his wall-climbing adventure roots.

RYGAR: THE LEGENDARY JOURNEY (Tecmo; PS2; Fall) Tecmo blows the dust off one of their long-forgotten heroes from the days of the 8-bit NES, giving him a slick 128-bit makeover. Brandishing a cool mythology based concept, destructible environments and his trusty Discarmor, Rygar is set to stomp anything and everything that gets in his way.

SHINOBI (Sega; PS2; Fall) After a lengthy absence, Sega's ultimate supernunja has returned and he's ready to kick some serious booty. Featuring new ninjitsu techniques such as the stealth dash and the ability to run along walls, this red-hot sequel relies on quick thinking and even faster reflexes. ■ JMcD



manga MANIA!

COOL JAPANESE COMIC AND ANIME NEWS YOU NEED TO KNOW...

'GHOST IN THE SHELL' RETURNS

Masamune Shirow 'raises the comic bar' in long-awaited follow-up

It's taken more than 10 years to get it right and six years to get it published in the U.S., but this October, it finally arrives.

Ghost in the Shell 2: Man-Machine Interface, one of the most highly anticipated manga sequels of all time, is set to make its English translation debut from Dark Horse Comics and Studio Proteus, but its creator, Masamune Shirow, would first like to offer an apology.

"*Ghost in the Shell* and *Ghost in the Shell 2* are two related manga," he begins, speaking courtesy of Kodansha Publishing in Japan, who first printed *Interface* there serially in *Young Mangazine* beginning in 1991. "If you just read *Man-Machine Interface*, it's perhaps not easy to grasp some of the characters in it. Hopefully, most readers will have read the first *Ghost in the Shell* volume."

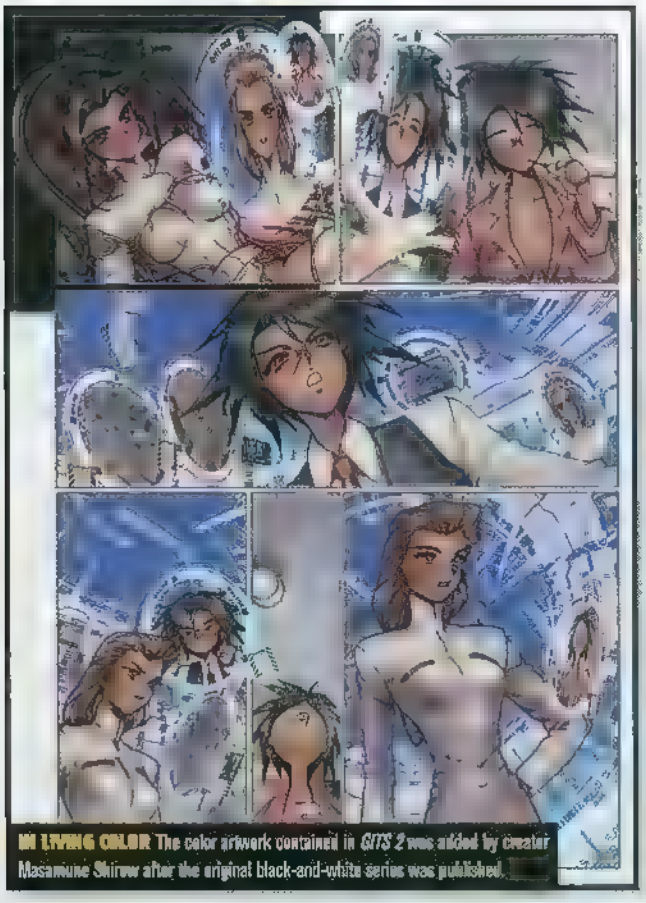
The humble Shirow should have nothing to worry about. After all, since Dark Horse first put out the English translation of the original *GITS* manga in December 1995 (the anime based on it hit U.S. theaters in January 1996 and garnered rave reviews), fans this side of the Pacific have been craving the sequel. Along with Katsuhiro Otomo's *Akira*, some have even credited *GITS* for helping popularize manga and anime in the States.

The task of translating this opus for American audiences falls on the shoulders of Toren Smith and Frederick L. Schodt of Studio Proteus, who both worked on the original *GITS*.

"[Translating Shirow] is like eavesdropping on a deep conversation between two people who know each other really well, and have no need to make concessions to anyone else who might be listening," relates Schodt, who is still in the process of translating *Interface*. "I've therefore had the experience of spending days, weeks, even months

LEADING LADIES In *Ghost in the Shell 2: Man Machine Interface*, Motoko Kusanagi (above) returns, though in a supporting role for new protagonist Motoko Aramaki (right), seen here on the cover of the manga's Japanese edition.

DigitalMAGE



IN LIVING COLOR The color artwork contained in *GITS 2* was added by creator Masamune Shirow after the original black-and-white series was published.

"*Interface* is a visual experience unlike anything in the annals of graphic fiction," raves Chris Warner of Dark Horse, who helped edit the book for American audiences. "Shirow has raised the bar as to what is possible on the comic book page."

"You might notice there are more elements [in *Interface*] that resonate more with ["Ghost in the Shell" movie director] Mamoru Oshii's imagery [from the film rather] than with the manga," points out Shirow.

In addition to the *Interface* manga, Shirow says there is an animated movie (again helmed by Oshii), a TV show (28 original episodes of "Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex" to be produced by Production I.G., which Bandai Entertainment has recently secured the North American rights for) and even a video game in the works.

And that doesn't even count the numerous other projects he's been gradually working on in the last decade, which includes drawing for three more *Intron Depot* volumes of his collected artwork and supervising animations based on "Orion" and "Appleseed."

"What I would really like to do is to forget about business and make some original short animated films on my own," sighs the busy creator. "One day, when time allows." ■ **JENNIFER M. CONTINO**

trying to find the exact English counterpart to a Japanese term, only to hear later from Japan that, 'well, actually, it was made up.'"

The first series laid the groundwork for this planned 11-issue follow-up, which contains nearly 200 pages(!) of extra color art and story added since its first black-and-white publication (which is the main reason for its delayed debut in the U.S.).

The premise: It's March 6, 2035. Four years and five months have passed since Major Motoko Kusanagi "connected" to intellectual living phenomena and quit the 9th Police Squad. *Interface* introduces a new protagonist named Motoko Aramaki, a cyborg fusion of multiple identities who works as a counterterrorist net security specialist. Her dealings lead her to cross paths with Tamaki Tamai, a spiritualistic voyager.

"Tamai is a channeller who works at the heart of the Japanese government," explains Shirow, "and the whole story of *Man-Machine Interface* is in itself a descriptive report of her visions. [The story] is basically additional commentary on elements such as 'the network' and 'artificial intelligence' that first appeared in *Ghost in the Shell*."

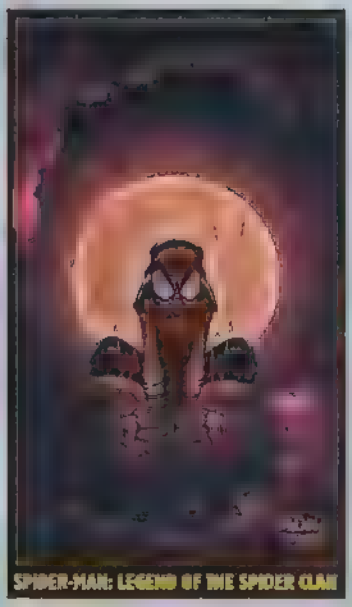
And while the story is itself a powerful message, it's Shirow's visuals that have always wowed readers, especially his renderings of the female form. The sequel promises more of the same.

CREATURE FEATURE Much of *GITS 2* takes place again in cyberspace, where fantastical characters (like those above) abound.

BUZZBOX

SPIDER-MANGA This October, the Marvel Mangaverse version of Spider-Man is back by popular demand in the all-new *Spider-Man: Legend of the Spider-Clan*. It will replace Ben Dunn's current series, *Marvel Mangaverse*, which ends with September's issue #6.

This new-anime inspired book comes courtesy of Mangaverse Spidey creator and cover artist Kaare Andrews with art by red-hot newcomer Skottie Young (*Ultimate X-Men* #37). Picking up shortly after the events of the *Spider-Man* one-shot from last January's fifth-week event, *Spider-Clan* will follow young ninja-in-training Peter Parker, who possesses no real superpowers but tries to find his way as he juggles being a superhero with the daily grind of being a high school student.



SPIDER-MAN: LEGEND OF THE SPIDER CLAN

For Andrews, the project is a chance for him to creatively run free. "I love the fact that there is so much history and so many characters from the Spider-Man universe that I can draw from," he says excitedly. "And I have to worry spit about continuity!"

A Marvel rookie, artist Skottie Young is relishing the opportunity. "You couldn't put me on a more fitting book!" he exclaims. "My style is very urban/skater/graffiti-inspired, so you have a take on Spider-Man that places him at a very young age. I could try and think up a million ways to say what I'm feeling about this project, but all I can say right now is, It's dope!" Fans diggin' the artist's stylin' take on the Webhead should check out **www.ledheavy.com** for even more of Young's ultra-slick art.

■ **JAMES McDONOUGH**

EAST INVADES THE WEST

Gundam, drums and cosplay headline Anime Expo 2002 in Cali

It's the largest anime convention in America. It's been happening for over a decade. It's got a lot to live up to. But none of the 16,000-plus fans left Long Beach, Calif. disappointed...or empty-handed.

The highlights of the 2002 Anime Expo, held over the July 4th holiday weekend, included the premieres of Bandai's new Gundam series (in America, at least), "G-Gundam," as well as the theatrical premiere of the Cowboy Bebop movie "Knockin' on Heaven's Door," which was packed (you can see it this October, thanks to Columbia Tristar). Not one, but two concerts were held, by J pop sensation Puffy AmiYumi and by the queen of ParaPara (mixing anime songs and Eurobeat dance), Yoko Ishida.

Con plotter Jenny Chu and flunkie Bricken

The biggest draw, as always, was the Masquerade event, with over 50 skits. The show began with the Delano High School Drum Ensemble, which played a six-minute medley of "Final Fantasy" music—all with percussion—and each member in costume! Several other "Final Fantasy" skits filled the night (including one where the *FFX* crew sang the Meow Mix theme to defeat monster Yojimbo), but the winner of the Con was a two-minute, perfectly costumed, absolutely beautiful stage rendition of *Vampire Hunter D: Bloodlust*.

The days were packed as well; each company had their own exhibits, like Pioneer, who re-created a Gothic house, staffed by Alucard, gun-toting vampire from their hit series *Hellsing*. Bandai had video games, model-building contests and an in-exhibit theater. ADV had a two-story base from which they dispensed free shirts and swag like benevolent kings to the screaming throng. TokyoPop, not to be outdone, set up outside with games and a real 1986 Toyota Sprinter Trueno AE86, as featured in the extra-cool street racing manga, *Initial D*.

Most important were the anime announcements. Otaku were pleased to hear ADV will be publishing "Rahxephon," the new brooding mecha anime and current favorite in Japan. TokyoPop will bring out the long-awaited *Lupin the III* manga this year, and Central Park Media will bring out the fan-favorite "Revolutionary Girl Utena" TV series. Pioneer had a ton of new licenses, including incredibly cute yet surprisingly violent "Mahoromatic," the third "Fushigi Yuugi" series, and "Chobits," the newest series from CLAMP ("X," "Cardcaptor Sakura"). Best of all was the news that Viz was in talks with Cartoon Network to put the "Inu-Yasha" anime (based of Rumiko Takahashi's hit manga) on TV.

Anime Expo also saw the debut of two new manga anthologies. The first is *Raijin Comics*, which will include *Grappler Baki* and *City Hunter* and, like manga in Japan, will be sold weekly. Viz's *Shonen Jump*—the American version of the super-popular Japanese anthology—will run hundreds of pages and include manga like *Dragon Ball Z* and *Yu-Gi-Oh!* but will be sold monthly.

■ **ROBERT BRICKEN**

HOT IMPORTS

MANGA

BATTLE ANGEL ALITA LAST ORDER (Part 1) #1 (Viz) Death is not the end for the cyborg Alita. After Desty Nova destroys her, Alita is reborn in "heaven," the floating city of Tiphares. Alita must remember her past to face down the masters of this strange new world. $2.95

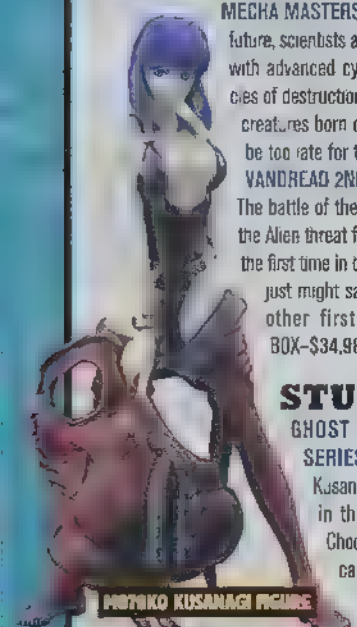
CANNON GOD EXAXXION # 9: STAGE TWO (Part 1) (Dark Horse) Houchu just wants to be a normal teen, but people keep insisting that he save the world from alien invaders! Luckily, he's got help: his crackpot scientist grandfather, a team of android women and an armed-to-the-teeth giant mecha. $3.99

SAINT LEGEND GN VOL. 1 OF 9 (ComicsOne) Hong Kong comics star Andy Seto joins ComicsOne's Kung Fu Comics imprint! Humans are losing their faith and are destroying temples, giving power to an evil spirit. In response, the eight most powerful immortals in the world unite to eliminate it. $13.95

ANIME

FIST OF THE NORTH STAR VOLS. 1 & 2 (Manga) In a post-apocalyptic future, sadistic despots, super-strong mutants and vicious biker gangs war for supremacy over humankind. Only one person can restore human civilization to its former glory–Kenshiro, master of Hokuto Shinken martial art. DVD–$29.95 each

GENERATOR GAWL PERFECT COLLECTION DVD SET (ADV) In order to save the world from Ryuko Saito and her unearthly Generator assassins, three time-travelers must stop Professor Nekasa from making the most incredible–and deadly–scientific discovery in history. 4 DISC DVD SET. $59.98



MECHA MASTERS BOX SET (U.S. Manga Corps) In the future, scientists are joining genetically enhanced humans with advanced cybernetics to create the ultimate vehicles of destruction. But when humans turn against these creatures born of their darkest natures, it may already be too late for the human race. DVD SET–$74.99

VANDREAD 2ND STAGE VOL. 1: SURVIVAL (Pioneer) The battle of the sexes has become an all-out war, but the Alien threat forces men and women to cooperate for the first time in centuries. The mixed crew of the *Nirvana* just might save the universe–if they don't kill each other first! DVD–$29.98; DVD W/STORAGE BOX–$34.98

STUFF

GHOST IN THE SHELL ACTION FIGURES SERIES 2 (Alpha/Toycom) Major Motoko Kusanagi, star of "Ghost in the Shell," returns in this hot new series of action figures. Choose from Kusanagi in a stylish white coat carrying a hand weapon, or fan service Kusanagi in a wetsuit. (December) $13.99 each

COMMENTS? QUESTIONS? STORY IDEAS? DROP US A LINE AT:
MANGAMANIA@WIZARDWORLD.COM

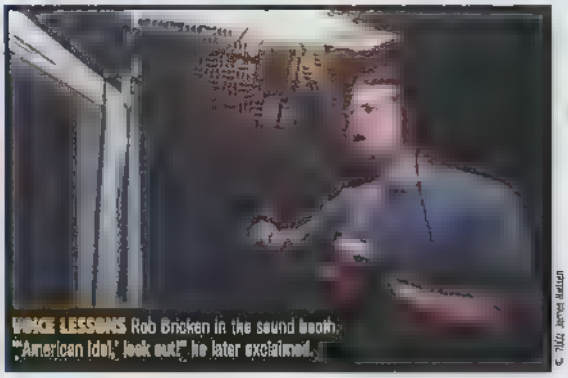
SPEAKING OUT

The down and dirty of voice acting

I'm in a closet, watching anime, and being asked to act more aroused.

Let me clarify. I'm at ADV Films, top-notch anime bringers over. I'm there to figure out the process of how anime gets dubbed—how the scripts get made, how the voices get recorded and how it all comes together in a tasty DVD. But ADV figured the best way to teach me was for me to do it myself, and they stuck me in their recording booth with a script in my hand and let me do voices in "Excel Saga," their hot superweird anime series, and "Colorful," a hilarious series of raunchy vignettes (due in 2003).

So far, under the direction of Steven Foster and Matt Greenfield, I've been a drunk, a yakuza (Japanese mafia guy) and, currently, a pervert. Obviously, the yakuza was hardest.



VOICE LESSONS Rob Bricken in the sound booth. "American Idol," look out!" he later exclaimed.

Voice acting is no cakewalk, as David Matranga (Orphen in "Orphen") can attest. "You have to be in character, but the emotion and still stay with all the mouth flaps. You still have to be able to act in character and go with the action. It's just as hard as regular acting." After spending 30 minutes on four lines, I agree.

Dubbing often gets a bad rap from hardcore anime fans because they frequently change voices, or dialogue, or jokes in the process. But as I learned at ADV, it's not nearly so simple as that. To find out more, pick up *Anime Invasion* #4, on sale now. ■ RB

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

BERSERK

You gotta love a guy whose name is Guts. In this 25-episode series, Guts is a one-eyed swordsman who battles demons to fulfill his mysterious destiny. Spectacular fight scenes, dramatic storytelling and awesome cel animation highlight this interpretation of Miura Kentaro's popular manga, which was also turned into a popular video game, *Sword of the Berserk: Guts' Rage* (Sega). **Media Blasters' AnimeWorks** Vol. 1 (Eps. 1-5) DVD–$29.95; Subbed or dubbed VHS–$24.95

BOOK of the MONTH!

DAREDEVIL

WITH A BOUNTY ON HIS HEAD AND A SECRET IDENTITY LEAKED TO THE PRESS, THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR PONDERS AN EARLY RETIREMENT

Daredevil's life has never run like clockwork, but lately, Matt Murdock's been getting ground up by the cogs. Since taking over Marvel Knights' *Daredevil* with issue #26, writer Brian Michael Bendis and artist Alex Maleev have had one mission in mind for the guardian of Hell's Kitchen.

"Take away his control," explains Bendis. "Back him into a corner and see how he responds. I'm obsessed with a quote by screenwriter Alvin Sargent. He said, 'Always put your characters in the place they would least like to be.'"

Bendis began throwing Murdock/DD's life into disarray in his very first ish when he introduced Mr. Silke, a rival underboss with designs on the Kingpin's throne. Silke's first order of business? Removing the Kingpin, a.k.a. Wilson Fisk, in a Julius Caesar-type assassination plot where all of Kingpin's underlings savagely stabbed the Fat Man to near death. From there on, the dominos began falling for Murdock and Daredevil.

"The status quo between Kingpin and Daredevil wasn't going to change unless a new element was added," reveals Bendis of Silke's role in the story. "When Kingpin learned Daredevil's secret identity [back in the mid-'80s], he created a situation where DD was always safe. Kingpin knew Daredevil's secret identity and did nothing with it! He had become Daredevil's greatest protector. That had to change."

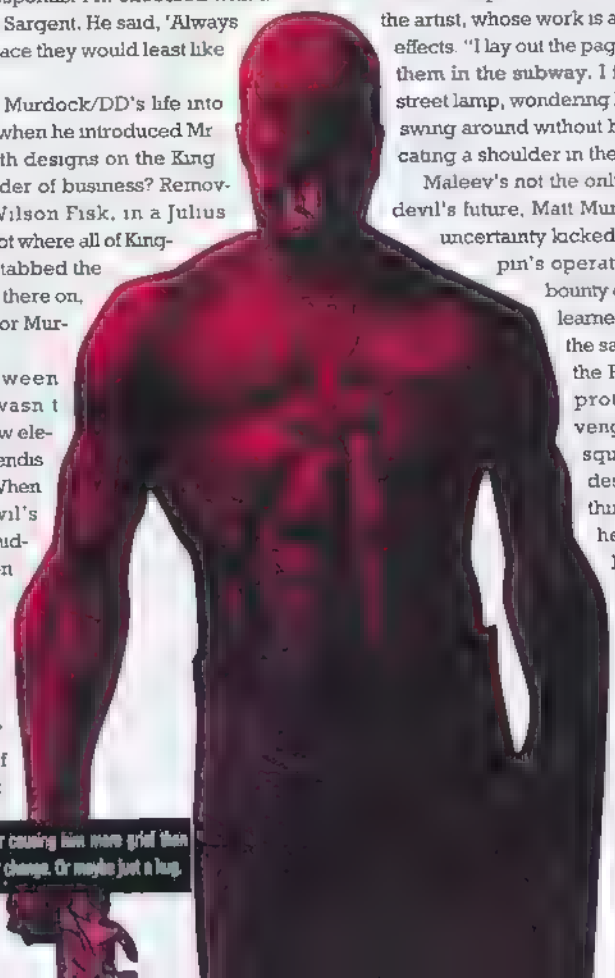
Since the introduction of Silke, Daredevil's been getting pummeled by one sucker punch after another. The life of Matt Murdock/Daredevil now resembles a horrible, twisted car wreck, and we can't help but be fascinated by the carnage.

Of course, carnage never looked so exquisite until Maleev rendered it. The seven-year vet, who emigrated to the U.S. from Bulgaria, says that living in New York gives him the inspiration needed to craft the gritty settings in Daredevil.

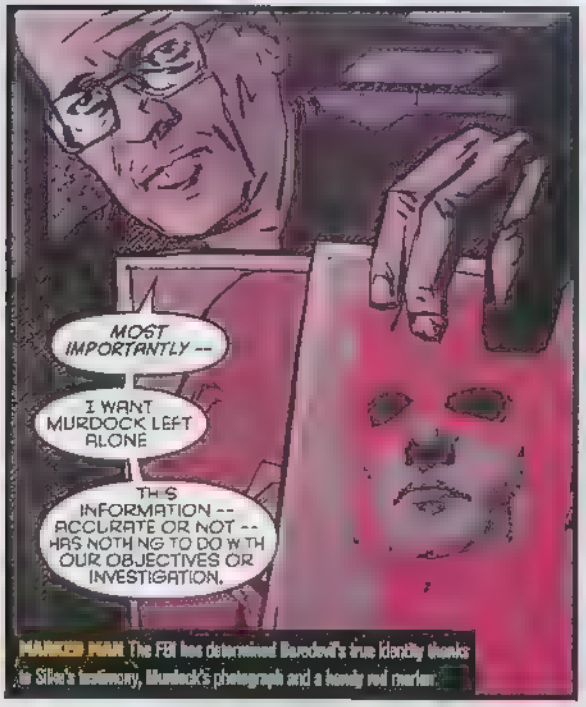
"I draw inspiration from everything around me," notes the artist, whose work is a hybrid of traditional and CGI effects. "I lay out the pages in the swimming pool, draw them in the subway. I find myself standing under a street lamp, wondering how the hell a blind guy would swing around without breaking his tailbone or dislocating a shoulder in the process."

Maleev's not the only one wondering about Daredevil's future. Matt Murdock has doubts as well. His uncertainty kicked off after Silke took over Kingpin's operations (in issue #27) and put a bounty on Murdock's head (#28). Silke learned Daredevil and Murdock were the same man, information he fed to the FBI in an effort to cut a deal to protect himself from Kingpin's vengeful wife (issue #32). Silke's squealing turns out to be more destructive to Murdock than anything ever whipped up by Hornhead's rogues, as one greedy FBI agent leaks the story to the *Daily Globe*. The very next day, Murdock's mug is pasted on the front page, with a screaming 100-point headline: "PULP HERO OF HELL'S KITCHEN IS BLIND LAWYER."

And just like that, one greasy, low level mobster who has one minor run-in with DD manages to send Murdock's ever-chaotic life



DEVIL DAYS: With a minor mobster causing him more grief than usual, Daredevil might require a career change. Or maybe just a hug.


MOST IMPORTANTLY --
I WANT MURDOCK LEFT ALONE
THIS INFORMATION -- ACCURATE OR NOT -- HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH OUR OBJECTIVES OR INVESTIGATION.
MARKED MAN The FBI has determined Daredevil's true identity thanks to Silke's testimony, Murdock's photograph and a handy red marker.

into a terrible tailspin.

"Isn't that just like real life?" questions Bendis. "How one guy, who you barely know, can mess up your life so badly? But outing Daredevil might not be that bad for him. He might elevate himself from superhero to urban folk hero. That's what it comes down to for me; I write about characters, not superheroes."

Daredevil and Matt Murdock will be dealing with their public "outing" through issue #37, although the problem won't vanish after that; it'll just get put on the back burner. With issue #38, Murdock puts away the tights and starts concentrating on the briefs...legal briefs, that is.

In the three-part "Trial of the Century," the fresh-out-of-retirement urban vigilante known as the White Tiger gets charged with murdering a police officer. It's up to Murdock to defend him, with a little help from Luke Cage, Iron Fist and private investigator Jessica Jones (from *Alias*, which Bendis also writes).

"There won't be any superhero shenanigans going on," assures Bendis. "We'll do a real superhero-on-trial story. I'm this close to getting my law degree, with all the research I put into it. It doesn't look good for the Tiger, and Matt realizes this case could be wind up being [his own life] at some point."

Beyond that, Bendis promises the Kingpin will return in issue #40, but not quite the way fans remembered him. "He and Daredevil will be on equal footing," comments Bendis. "Kingpin will be returning to his John Romita Sr. days, when he wasn't so much an overlord as he was a thug. He'll be back to square one."

If it sounds like Bendis can barely contain his enthusiasm, you're right—he considers his work on *Daredevil* the culmination of his fanboy dreams. "*Daredevil* is the book that made me want to do comics," gushes the scribe. "When I was offered the book, I wanted to put my mark on the series. A lot of great creators—like Frank Miller, Gene Colan and Wally Wood—have done their best work on this book, and that's what people expect." ■ **ANDY SERWIN**

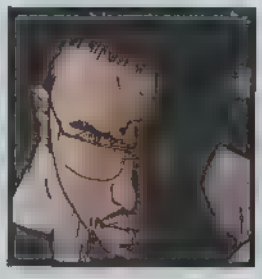
supportsystem

Brian Michael Bendis works wonders with the Man Without Fear, but you'd have to be blind to miss the magic Bendis has worked on the rest of Daredevil's cast.

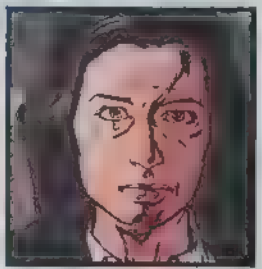
Don't believe us? Here's a rundown of how cool Bendis has made all the bit players since he took over *Daredevil*.

BEN URICH Until now, uncovering Daredevil's secret identity and surviving a stabbing from Elektra were Urich's biggest accomplishments. But standing up to J. Jonah Jameson in issue #34 made Urich a "super" hero in our book. The mild-mannered reporter stands up in a crowded news meeting and openly defies the fiery *Daily Bugle* publisher who wants his staff to crucify Matt Murdock, saying, "You want to rip him one just to rip him one. It's not news. It's an assassination." Looks like the newshound's got a bit of bulldog in him after all!

FOGGY NELSON Under Bendis, Foggy's become Matt's emotional crutch, the one person he relies on when he needs to talk something out. But Foggy's taking on a bigger role in DD's life as well—even counseling Matt to retire when his secret ID gets leaked! In issue #34, the normally sedate Nelson screams at Murdock, "What will convince you that enough is enough? Does Bullseye have to kill me now? Then you? Do you have to die?" We thought Foggy was a heck of a lawyer, but he's a pretty good shrink, too!



MR. SILKE How smoothe is Mr. Silke? The very first time we meet him (ish #26), he's staging his coup of Kingpin's operations. He even insults the crime lord, saying, "How many times does a guy have to have his fat behind handed to him before he gets the hint? My guess? You wanted to play dress-up since you were a kid, but you were too f—ing fat then." And with that, all of Kingpin's henchmen turn on him and repeatedly stab him, just like Julius Caesar. The phrase "smooth as silk" just took on a whole new meaning.



VANESSA FISK Vanessa's been hiding in the background lately; in fact, she's been living in Switzerland while Kingpin's taking care of business. But when her husband's nearly killed in a takeover attempt, a vengeful Vanessa orders the deaths of everyone involved. She even shoots her own traitorous son in issue #31, saying, "For all Wilson's faults, at least he was man enough to stand behind the ones he loved and earn his place in this world—while you...are a sniveling, deceitful coward." ■ **AS**

DigitalMAGE

SECRET STASH comics' hidden gems

PvP

A BIG BLUE TROLL, A CYNICAL EDITORIAL STAFF AND ONE FEARLESS CREATOR UNLEASH A POP-CULTURE-PACKED BITING SATIRE

THE DIRT When your office consists of blue trolls, surly Gen X-ers and only one female, you're either visiting the *Wizard* offices or those of *PvP* magazine, the backdrop for Scott Kurtz's ongoing bi-monthly *PvP* from Dork Storm.

DOYA LIKE? *PvP* offers up the comic strip humor of Frank Cho's *Liberty Meadows* mixed with jabs at everything from pop culture icons to mainstream comics to the small press in general.

DIDJA KNOW? Originally, the cast of *PvP* wasn't going to be the editorial department of a video game magazine. "These characters were supposed to be teachers and a principal at an elementary school," reveals Kurtz. The characters were altered to the *PvP* staff when Kurtz posted the strip on a video game Website.

If there's a dictionary devoted to alternative comics, under the definition for "testicular fortitude," you'll find a picture of Scott Kurtz.

"I make fun of things; that's my job as a cartoonist," he explains. "I've spent the last month making fun of myself, comic book fans, 'Star Wars' fans—I'm an equal opportunity poker of fun."

Through his bi-monthly comic, *PvP*, from Dork Storm, Kurtz has become one of the most controversial creators in the small press. While in the world of alternative comics it's become almost passé to take the occasional jab at mainstream books, pop culture and hackneyed comic elements (which *PvP* has done in spades), it's an unwritten taboo to aim the pointed pen back at the close-knit small press community, which Kurtz does on a usual basis in *PvP* or with his daily online strips at **www.pvponline.com.**

"When you have a group like the alternative press that bypasses the whole editorial process, they're doing that for a reason—they don't like criticism," comments Kurtz. "It's no surprise they're flipping out. A lot of [the books coming out right now are] just crap, and it's not going to go anywhere if they don't make certain changes."

In fact, Kurtz initially got my attention after I discovered he'd taken a shot at yours truly and *Wizard* magazine in a May 30 online strip (I seem to remember the word "sell-out" being used). While I was completely flattered by the satire, it wasn't until Kurtz sent me *PvP* #1-#5 that I realized that, behind the acid-tongued online criticism, lies a remarkable talent and a clever series.

BUSINESS STAFF Watch out—the personnel at *PvP* magazine are guarding for your small press sensibilities.

TAKE THE REEP MARKER, AND I'LL SHOW YOU JUST HOW MANY PAGES THIS STORY RUNS.
SHOW ME.
EXCELLENT. YOU'VE TAKEN YOUR FIRST STEP INTO A LARGER WORLD.
NEO, PLEASE DON'T SNIFF THE MARKER.
HUH? SORRY.

MATRIX MIMICRY In *PvP*, even the "Matrix" isn't safe from parody. In issue #4, series slacker Brent (as Neo) doesn't exactly follow the white rabbit down the hole.

PvP follows the daily rituals of the staff of *PvP* magazine (a fictional video game-centric publication). As anyone who works in journalism can tell you, the hours are long and—like it or not—your fellow employees become an extended family. The folks at *PvP* are no different. The cast includes Brent (the artistic force and resident know-it-all), Jade (the sole female employee and mother hen), Francis (a chat room punk and video game freak), Cole (the clueless editor in chief) and Skull (*PvP*'s permanent intern and big blue troll).

"'PvP' is a video game term which means 'Player vs. Player,' where you play head-to-head against a real person," explains Kurtz. "The staff is a big family, but it's a dysfunctional one. They're constantly one-upping each other and at each other's throats, so the name applies to them as well."

Ever the shrewd storyteller, Kurtz flawlessly incorporates pop culture and industry satire in each issue, the best example being *PvP* #5, titled "What Is the Comix?", which found the cast in the world of "The Matrix." Rather than face off against the Agents, the *PvP* clan battled the Editors. The story's climax comes when Brent, playing the role of Neo, defiantly stands up to an Editor with the classic line, "You can't hurt me, because I'm creator-owned."

The gloves really came off when Kurtz faced off against the small press in a series of online strips. Skull decides to break into the comic biz, despite having no talent. Right from the storyline's start, Kurtz stepped on the industry's toes. When Skull asks what alternative comics are, Brent sardonically replies, "Comics that suck, but it's okay because they're art." Granted, I may not agree with Brent's definition, but I do appreciate the fact that he's brilliantly summed up the holier-than-thou attitude that the small press sometimes exudes. Judging from the reaction on message boards, it's clear many in the small press don't share Kurtz's sense of humor.

In August's *PvP* #6, Skull assumes the mantle of Cupid and finds out that the PvP staff may be a little too self-absorbed for his magical arrows. Mike Kunkel (*Herobear and the Kid*) supplies the cover art. Issue #7 finds the *PvP* staff at their first convention, where they try to convince Jade to be their "booth babe."

Call me a sucker for anything that causes controversy, but pick up an issue of *PvP* and I truly doubt you'll be disappointed. And if you're still not convinced, check out the last three year's worth of online strips at the aforementioned PvP Website.

THE LAST WORD *PvP* is the closest an independent comic can get to the perfect satire. All the elements are here: inviting art, characters you love to hate and subtle commentary that's funny, but doesn't preach. Pick it up today. ■ CASEY SEIJAS

HIDE 'N' SEEK

TRACK THESE BABIES DOWN

IT'S BACK!

The small press event of the year returns!

After being canceled last year due to the tragic events of Sept. 11, the alternative comics community will once again converge at the Holiday Inn Select in Bethesda, Maryland on Sept. 6-8 for the Small Press Expo, or as it's more commonly known, SPX.

With a list of attendees that reads like a "Who's Who" of independent creators and publishers, it's clear that, despite taking a year off, SPX has returned with a bang. Among the 177 creators expected to attend are Jeff Smith (*Bone*), Evan Dorkin (*Milk & Cheese*), Frank Cho (*Liberty Meadows*) and the legendary creator of *Maus*, Art Spiegelman. You can also pick up the latest releases from your favorite publishers such as Drawn & Quarterly, Oni Press, Fantagraphics and Top Shelf Productions.

"As the nation's premiere alternative comics convention, it's simply the most important showcase for our books," said Top Shelf Productions Publisher Chris Staros. "It's a family from the start."

And if you just so happen to have your own mini-comic or self-published title, SPX is the perfect place to debut it.

"At SPX, you know that anyone who shows up is looking for something different, and that's what the underground is all about," explained *Deep Fried* creator Jason Yungbluth. "Meanwhile, you're rubbing shoulders with the hippest indy talent, though if any fanboy comes up to me from behind and starts rubbing my shoulders again this year, blood will flow!"

So if you're a fan of the small press, be sure to find your way to Bethesda this Sept. 6-8. For more information, visit the SPX Website at www.spxpo.com. ■ CS

WANNA PICK THIS SERIES UP?

Call 1-888-COMIC BOOK to locate your nearest comic shop, or visit www.kaganmcleod.com/infinitekungfu for order info. Know about a cool book that deserves some coverage? E-mail us at secretstash@wizardworld.com or write to "Secret Stash," c/o Wizard Entertainment, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY, 10920.

HERITAGE HOOPLA

Signature auction nets nearly $5 mil.

We should respect our Heritage.

The Heritage Signature Auction, held at Wizard World Chicago from July 5-7, roped in nearly $5 million worth of respect. Heritage auctioned off 2,100 of 2,530 total lots, an 83 percent sell-through.

"The results were amazing," said John Petty, director of auctions at Heritage Comics. "We would have been happy with $4 million and a 60 percent sell-through. This was insanely successful."

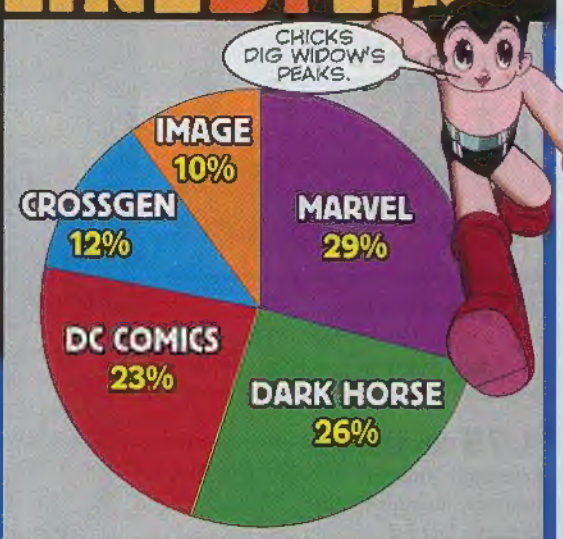
Heritage arrived in Chicago armed with a diverse selection of lots, including Golden/Silver Age comics, original artwork and movie posters. A full issue of Steve Ditko's original interior art (*Amazing Spider-Man* #10) netted a hefty $161,000. A pristine *Batman* #1, rated 8.0 by CGC, garnered a whopping $57,500. (For more info on Golden Age sales, see sidebar on pg. 151.)

The biggest draw was the recently uncovered Silver Age Marvel books that Stan Lee used as his personal file copies. Most were in shabby condition but had been CGC-graded nonetheless. Even those with very low grades (there was a *Strange Tales* #135 graded 1.0) went anywhere from two to 45 times their estimated value. In fact, Lee's file copies often sold for much higher than a non-file copy of the same issue with a higher grade. For example, Stan Lee's copy of *Avengers* #1, CGC-graded at 3.0, sold for $2,357. Another copy of *Avengers* #1 offered by Heritage, graded at 8.0, earned only $1,840.

"[The Lee file copy sales] just show how much people love, revere and treasure Stan Lee and the work that he's done," said Petty. ■ **CAITLIN MORIARITY**

BREAK IT ON DOWN NOW!

LINEBYLINE



NEW TRADE PAPERBACK/ GRAPHIC NOVEL/HARDCOVER MARKET SHARE FROM MAJOR COMIC COMPANIES*

Marvel: includes *GI Joe Vol. 1*, *'Nuff Said* and *The Marvel Encyclopedia*
Dark Horse: includes *Astro Boy*, *Lone Wolf and Cub* and *Oh My Goddess*
DC Comics: includes *Selina's Big Score*, *The Spirit Archives* and *Crisis on Multiple Earths*
CrossGen: includes *Forge*, *Edge* and *Crux Vol. 1*
Image: includes *Bulletproof Monk*, *Powers: Little Deaths* and *Midnight Nation*

* Calculated according to new releases from Feb. 2002 to July 2002

UPS & DOWNS

HE-MAN COMICS The new *Masters of the Universe* promo comic (available only at Wizard World Chicago) from MV Creations/Image is already hitting $10 online. Issues from both the early '80s DC mini-series and the Star/Marvel regular series have been harnessing the Power of Grayskull, with issue #1 of the Star Comics series going for as much as $25!

CON EXCLUSIVES Speaking of promo items, the MOTU promo comic was just one of a ton of cool convention-exclusive goodies available at Wizard World Chicago. The Chrome Edition Silver Surfer bust from Bowen Designs has already fetched $400 online! Keep your eyes peeled for the *Battle of the Planets* #1 Chicago Edition featuring a cool variant cover from penciler Wilson Tortosa.

INCREDIBLE HULK Issue #34 is still the hottest *Hulk* going, but issue #35 (the second issue in the Jones/Romita Jr. run) and #40 (the issue following those collected in the recent "Return of the Monster" trade) are both picking up steam.

GEN[13] RELAUNCH The fact that a 13-cent-priced book wasn't the number one title for July is disappointing for Wildstorm/DC. Just months ago, *Batman: The 10-Cent Adventure* sold somewhere in the vicinity of 700,000 copies; *Gen[13]* #0 is estimated to have sold just over a seventh of that.

BIG HONKIN' ROBOTS The Transformers, those Cybertronian freaks, have held the No. 1 slot atop the Diamond chart for four straight months. *Transformers: Armada* made a helluva splash, while *G1* #4 holding steady at No. 2 is damned impressive.

RELAUNCHED X-BOOKS *Agent X*, *Soldier X* and *X-Statix* all had very strong debuts, significantly above their predecessors. This bodes well for Marvel and fans who can't get enough X in their lives.

OLD SCHOOL BOTP Gold Key's nine-issue run of *Battle of the Planets* (from 1979-1980) has been one of the hot tickets throughout this summer's convention season. Issue #1 is an easy $20 item, while the rest of the issues are solid $10 items.

HOT 10 comics

***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the hottest back issues. These are the books ringing the registers this month...**

1 TRANSFORMERS: ARMADA #1

WRITER: Chris Sarracini
ARTIST: James Raiz

The juggernaut that is Dreamwave's Transformers line continues to roll through the comic industry. For the fourth straight month, a Transformers title cracks the Top Two. This time around, it's the first issue of the new ongoing *Transformers: Armada*. *Armada* has seen mad action on the collectors' market, and fans are more than willing to fork out the extra cash for the snazzy chrome variant cover. How much extra? Try 40 bucks worth! **LAST MONTH: Not Rated (N.R.)**

2 P. PARKER: SPIDER-MAN #44

WRITER: Paul Jenkins
ARTISTS: H. Ramos & W. Faucher

After taking a back seat for the past few months to its Amazing counterpart, *Peter Parker: Spider-Man* finally gets its moment in the spotlight, thanks in part to the return of the badder-than-ever Green Goblin, deftly written by Paul Jenkins and penciled to perfection by Humberto Ramos. Issue #44 was vastly underordered, sold out damn near immediately, and now fetches $15 on the back market! You can buy a lotta *Spidey Super Stories* for that, folks... **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

3 SPIDER-MAN/BLACK CAT: THE EVIL THAT MEN DO #1

WRITER: Kevin Smith
ARTISTS: Terry and Rachel Dodson

Who woulda thunk that a book written by Kevin Smith, starring the super-sexy Black Cat and penciled by Terry "I draw hot chicks really well" Dodson would be a sizzling back issue? Well, retailers for one, who pre-ordered the heck outta Mr. Smith's latest comic foray. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

4 INCREDIBLE HULK #34

WRITER: Bruce Jones
ARTISTS: John Romita Jr. & Tom Palmer

Old Faithful is still holdin' steady on the Hot 10 list with no signs of slowing. This marks the sixth straight month *Incredible Hulk* #34 has been on the list, not once dropping below #5. With back issues now going for $25, you can expect this ish to be a hot one for months to come. **LAST MONTH: 5**

5 BATTLE OF THE PLANETS #1 (MIKE TURNER COVER)

WRITER: Munier Sharrieff
ARTISTS: A. Ross & W. Tortosa

Even though there are four different covers by the likes of Marc Silvestri and Alex Ross, it's the Mike Turner cover that fans are scurrying for. This cover debuts Turner's "no inking" style, which is sure to make the tracers of the world upset considering how bad-ass it looks. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

6 ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN #5

WRITER: Brian Michael Bendis
ARTISTS: Mark Bagley & Art Thibert

Holy calamity! Three Spider-Man books on the Hot 10 list?! Even though the hype of the movie is slowly subsiding, the Spider-Man comics remain hotter than Tobasco sauce on Britney Spears. *Ultimate Spider-Man* issues come and go off this list, but currently, the super-rare issue #5 is the book fans can't seem to find. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

7 DAREDEVIL #26

WRITER: Brian Michael Bendis
ARTIST: Alex Maleev

If you're not reading the latest storyline in *Daredevil*, we want you to put this magazine down, get your mom to drive you to the comic shop and buy the entire damn run. It's that good. Don't believe us? Well, tell that to the retailers who have upped the price of the first issue of the Bendis/Maleev run to $5. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

8 HULK: THE END

WRITER: Peter David
ARTIST: Dale Keown

The first in the series of Marvel's "The End" stories has made a huge splash among collectors, despite the hefty $5.95 price tag. Whether it's the re-teaming of classic Hulk-sters Peter David and Dale Keown or how the Hulk finally ends his storied career, fans are picking up this book in surprising numbers. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

9 THE CALL OF DUTY: THE BROTHERHOOD #1

WRITERS: Chuck Austen & Bruce Jones
ARTISTS: David Finch & Art Thibert

Last month's No. 1 book takes a huge dive, but don't count it out, especially with September being the one-year anniversary of the 9/11 tragedy. While it's difficult to put a price tag on a series of this magnitude, retailers are selling the firemen-themed *Brotherhood* #1 for $10. **LAST MONTH: 1**

10 CAPTAIN AMERICA #3

WRITER: John Ney Rieber
ARTIST: John Cassaday

Hey, didja know that in addition to Tony Stark and Matt Murdock, Steve Rogers has been outed as the man behind a superhero's mask? No? That's because Marvel sprung a surprise on their loyal readers. In this soon-to-be-classic ish, Cap reveals his identity to America at large on national TV! Grab *Cap* #3 while you still can. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

DigitalMAGE

IN REMEMBRANCE

HEROES

MARVEL EDITOR-IN-CHIEF JOE QUESADA LOOKS BACK UPON 9/11 AND THE CALL TO DUTY

I remember commenting that through it all, how peaceful the morning had seemed. How the city was shrouded in that eerie calmness that only follows a heavy snowfall. This, of course, was different. This wasn't the snowdrift, muffled sounds of traffic and chatter but rather a city in a unified state of shock. Sure, there were the sirens outside my window and the chatter from office radios all tuned to different stations, but somehow they seemed a million miles away, just a low oscillating soundtrack to this nearly tangible silence.

Then a second tower fell.

We all prayed, even those of us that didn't believe in God. The horror was paralyzing; I just sat at my desk and heard the rumble of the fallen tower wash over and past East 40th Street like a freight train. It reminded me of when I lived in Queens, my bedroom window right next to the elevated track of the 7 train. I got so used to the sound of oncoming trains that I was able to sleep at night without ever waking up. Now, I was wondering how I would ever sleep calmly again.

There are so many vivid memories for me of 9/11, so many things that happened in light of the events. I remember watching as half my staff ran to Bellevue Hospital to donate blood while those that remained began taking up collections for the Red Cross. There were all the unavoidable images of the tragedy on every news station, magazine and newspaper; and then of course, there was the smell. The smell of ash, cement dust and sorrow that lingered for months as a constant reminder that if you hadn't done something to help, you had better check your membership card to the human race. Marvel and the comics' creative community created *Heroes* and several other tribute books only to suddenly find ourselves in the spotlight of the American media. It was bittersweet to have an event of such tragic magnitude be the thing to bring us to the forefront of the American public, but then I get reminded about history and comics' place in it. From cave paintings depicting great droughts and famine to pen and ink renderings of twin towers falling, it's times like these when comics truly shine. When we convey through our images emotions and messages in such a way that no one—comic enthusiast or not—can find anything but visceral, tangible and ultimately completely compelling.

I've been asked to recount this time last year and a part of me wishes I never had to again, but like all of us in the midst of it, it is a part of the fabric of our lives. September 11, 2001 changed the way that we all think. No longer was the idea of two 110-story buildings toppling to the ground merely in the land of the fertile minds of comicbook creators—it was now a part of our realities. No longer was some evil mastermind with plans to rule the world—clad in costume or not—as frightening as the suspiciously nervous person in the ill-fitting trench coat sitting next to us on a crowded bus. No question our lives have been changed forever, but there is still one constant: More than ever, we need our heroes.

In the world of comics, we tell many types of stories and tackle every genre and we do it better than any medium that I know of. But what we do more than anything else is tell stories of heroes. I've been asked many times—post-9/11—what good are these multicolored, spandex-clad, fictional characters in this time of "Real World" heroes? My answer is very simple: These stories we tell aren't just about fictional heroes, but about what these characters really represent, the heroic ideal! They are a representation of everything that we hold sacred and worthy about ourselves as humans, a reflection of the best that we can be. What 9/11 did was raise the bar of expectation. Now the line between Peter Parker putting on his red-and-blue costume and a civilian putting on a fire coat and helmet is wafer thin.

At Marvel—and in most of comics—we have a simple mission. We tell the tale of extraordinary people facing extraordinary adversity under extraordinary circumstances...and triumphing! Never before has that mandate been clearer.

Never before has the need to tell these types of stories been stronger.